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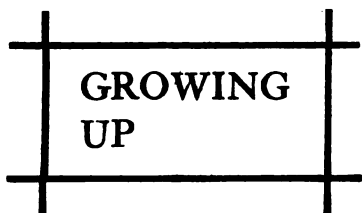
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To
MARY ELLEN

369078



PROLOGUE

THERE was a time when being a parent was a simple thing, if not always an easy one. Parents in those days knew exactly what was good for their children. It was good for them to obey their parents implicitly. It was good for them to believe their parents infallible. Parents were to be honored—the Bible said so. The parental will was to a child as the will of God to a true believer. If a child failed in obedience, then, too, one's course was clear—one did the awful thing known as breaking the child's will, and one did it with a clear conscience.

Children in those easy days were considered little lumps of clay to be molded by their parents into definite and approved patterns, and their minds were looked on as empty pitchers, to be filled by the wine of wisdom poured in by parents and teachers and others in authority.

While Tom and Alice Marcey were more modern than that in their beliefs, for the first two years and a half that they were parents they lived wrapped in complacency as in a garment. If they had not hidden the fact that they thought they were pretty nearly the only perfect parents living, no one would have stood them a minute.

They thought in their hearts that Robert was so good and well because they were unusually wise people. They were so sure of this that they spent many agreeable evenings thanking God that they were not as other

They criticised the way their neighbors brought up their babies. Gladys Grayson was not made to eat her meals with unbroken regularity. The Alden twins were having their nerves destroyed by being played with far too much. Indeed, during this time—when Robert's teeth were there and his personality had not yet popped out on them—one would have thought, to hear them, that there were exactly two wise and consistent parents in the world, and their names were Tom and Alice Marcey.

As Alice's mother listened to them her smile was touched with compassion. Older women often smile this way at their sons and daughters, saying to themselves: "Strut while you can, and while you can believe that you are a good father and mother. Soon enough you will find yourselves out." She would have kept still always, except that one day Alice stung her beyond endurance by saying:

"How well I remember when I used to be made to eat oatmeal and soft boiled eggs! And when I think how I suffered all for nothing!—for oatmeal as you cooked it isn't a suitable food for children—"

Her mother at last spoke:

"Alice," said she, "you will find as time goes on that you will make mistakes—many and many of them. All that any mother can do is the best she knows. But I can tell you that the way to do the best she knows is not to be sure of herself. If she's sure she's always right she has *even less* chance of understanding her children than most parents."

She underscored the "even less," and it gave Alice food for thought, although it didn't seem possible that she or Tom would fail Robert in understanding.

Robert seemed the most easily understandable child in the world. Fearless, full of laughter, walking the

earth triumphantly, and passing secure through the pitfalls which lie in wait for children. Alice did not suspect that he was growing a character after his own pattern, the design of which she had no more to do with in the choosing than the color of his eyes or whether he was to be a boy or a girl.

She thought that the hardest part of being a mother was behind her. Teething was over. They had passed that dark spot which in the eyes of anxious young mothers is dotted with small white gravestones and which is known as the Second Summer. Yet there was Robert, hatching a plot that was to kill her complacency forever. He diverted her mind from what he was about by having infantile ailments; by getting weaned, by changes of diet, by learning to walk, growing his personality behind his mother's back.

In the back of her mind she knew that she had been begging the question, and that for a long time this definite personality had been looking at her level-eyed. She had made excuses to herself about it. When the personality showed itself unpleasantly she had explained it with, "Robert isn't feeling well to-day." It flickered in and out of her range of vision, like a will-o'-the-wisp, now staying for half an hour, now vanishing and leaving behind the good baby that regular training had made Robert.

If Alice had wanted to look the fact squarely in the face, she could have seen for some time past Robert was no longer a little mechanism. His conduct had become like bacon, now fat and now lean. Only the other day he had sat down beside the road, and when Alice had told him to come along, he said with his disconcerting tranquillity:

"I like it here." When Alice had asked him if he would come walking like a man or be carried like a

baby, he replied without hesitation that he would be carried like a baby. At that when she tucked him under her arm and carried him off bodily, he roared. But it was when the goldfish came that Robert's character popped out of hiding for good, and it was then that Alice and Tom Marcey started on the Parents' Progress which must begin with humility if it is to end in understanding.

CHAPTER I

THE Marceys' education began by Tom's mother leaving the goldfish at the house when she went away on a visit. She was a voluminous and stately lady, and try as she would, Alice could never link her up with Tom. It could never seem to her as if she was his mother. There was something about her vaguely Victorian. She belonged to another time and another way of looking at things, and her elegance was that of another generation. She lived alone on the top of a hill, and when she descended, her flowing draperies around her, she looked august as a Thackeray Dowager.

She had two mongrel dogs alleging to be terriers, which Alice had to feed in her absence. It was the second day after the elder Mrs. Marcey's departure, that Alice flew down the hill as though in the wake of disaster.

Usually she liked this walk. From her mother-in-law's big house you could see the whole wide valley spread out below you, through the chestnut trees. Alice knew half the people who lived in the houses she passed by; pleasant houses, they were, of a well-to-do New York suburb; houses with children in them, and with flowers growing in the little gardens; neat little houses, white with green blinds, set down in the midst of big trees, looking as if they had strolled in at random.

Sue Grayson, Alice's chum, called to her—"Come in for a minute, what are you in such a hurry about?"

"I've got to get back," said Alice, and hurried along.

Things, she felt, were not right at home. She felt she couldn't get home quickly enough. She wanted to know the worst. She wanted to know if Robert had disobeyed again. She didn't trust Laurie,—what do nurses of Scotch-Irish ancestry know about discipline—no matter how long they've been with you. Alice didn't trust anybody to watch Robert in this emergency; she didn't even trust Tom.

What had happened was that the Mooted Question which sooner or later comes into the lives of all parents had come to cloud the life of Tom and Alice Marcey. This question goes:

Should we spank our child?

Before the question of To Spank or Not to Spank, the question of To Be or Not to Be pales into mere philosophical sniveling. For while you are discussing being, you Are; and while you are discussing Spanking, your child runs down the path ahead of you, turning to you his unsuspecting rear, which has never been defiled by what is euphemistically known as "Corporal Punishment," and when you have gotten to the point of discussing whether you shall apply it or not, something has gone wrong.

What sort of parents are you if you must resort to violence? What moral bankruptcy it shows when you have to become a terrorist to make your two and a half year old child mind?

In this fashion the question had spread its dark wings over the lives of Tom and Alice Marcey. They lay awake nights discussing it; they stopped talking about whether they should send Robert to a technical school or to college, they had even put aside the question of whether he had better go to public school or whether he had better be registered right away for one of the best private schools.

Instead they discussed such questions as: is IT good for any children, ever? or are there certain things that all children must learn, even at the cost of a spanking? Is spanking an unpardonable crime against childhood, or is this extreme view a sentimental weakness? They argued it back and forth as have thousands of other unhappy parents ever since the old ideas on the bringing up of children softened, and the simple theory, "Spare the rod and spoil the child," gave place to these heart-burning midnight discussions. Like other parents they couldn't bear to face the awful deed. They learned the tragic inwardness of the old joke: "It hurts me more than it does you."

The question came to them as a dark enigma—

"Your child," it said, "has defied you. At two and a half he sets up his will. What are you going to do? Are you going to let him catch his grandmother's gold fish, which were confided to your care? How are you going to stop him? All your theories have failed. Moral suasion is bankrupt. He wants those goldfish. Meantime I am here."

Thus the question stood waiting to be answered. No parent having answered it can ever again be quite as sure again of his judgment.

Whichever you answer, you will forever ask yourself, "*Have I done right?*"

It was on account of the Mooted Question that Alice could not stand the thought of stopping to talk to Gladys, no such question had ever darkened Sue Greyson's life, there was not a single crack in her friend's complacency, nor had any such disgraceful decision, she was sure, ever confronted the parents of the Alden twins who were just now turning out of their yard. A low stone wall separated the garden from the street. They were preceded by their Dandie Dinmont and they were

followed by their austere English nurse. No fear that things had ever gotten to such a pass in that family that a spanking would be required.

No fear that the Alden twins would be overcome by an irresistible impulse to fish for goldfish with their bare hands. It was these goldfish that threatened the complacency of the Marceys. They swam around and around in a large globe; their scales flashed in the sun, their tails flapped them along with ease. Robert put his hand in the globe with the intention of taking one of the fish out. Alice remonstrated with him.

"Those are your grandma's fish," she told him. To which Robert replied:

"I want 'em."

She led him away and interested him in other things. He was always easily turned from one amusement to another, and he was so well balanced that he had concealed his personality under an impenetrable mask of good nature. Now it came to the surface. He intended to catch a fish. You might lead him away. He would go with you, bide his time, and return. If you asked him if he intended to mind Mama he replied with firmness:

"I want 'em." If he was asked if he wanted to hurt the poor little fish he still replied: "I want 'em." He was irritatingly serene, and he was equally definite and straightforward.

With a sense of disaster growing upon her Alice hastened her footsteps. Everywhere were flowers, everywhere children were playing. She could catch sight behind the vines of the voluminous Mrs. Painter who was chirruping to a cage of canaries.

Alice turned up into her own yard. Robert was nowhere in sight. The front hall, in comparison with the sunlight, seemed dark, but shining in the midst of it

was the rear of Robert's unsuspecting white rompers.

"How's my sweet baby?" Alice began, with treacherous sweetness. He ran to her and clasped her around the knees. She ran a perfidious hand down over the sleeve of his romper, the cuff was soaking wet.

"Oh, Robert!" she cried, "you disobeyed mother, you've been fishing again, Robert!"

He nodded three times, in confirmation, looking at her fearlessly. He was so little, she was so big, and yet he had shattered her complacency. Alice Marcey, the complacent parent, had ceased to exist.

CHAPTER II

WHEN Tom Marcey came home that afternoon, they agreed that something had to be done. "That child has got to learn to mind," Tom asserted.

"I can't bear to think of spanking him, he is only two and a half. He was always a perfectly reasonable child until the goldfish came," said Alice hotly.

"Mother's fish are only the immediate cause," Tom argued. "He's always had the germ of this unreasonableness."

They walked together into the library. Between the windows stood the globe. Before it, absorbed as a scientist, was Robert. His yellow head was as shining as the goldfish. His fat hand was clutching in the water, while the desire of his heart forever eluded him. He did not even turn at the sound of his parents' footsteps. He had not learned fear. He had decided to catch a fish, and he didn't care who knew it.

Something indeed had to be done.

"Robert!" said Tom.

He looked around, a frown on his face.

"I couldn't get him," he told his father.

"You disobeyed father!" Tom began.

"Oh, Tom! Don't do anything rash! I hated my parents every time they spanked me. It never did any good. Oh, if you make Robert hate you——"

"See here, Alice," said Tom, "he's got to understand, hasn't he?"

The object of this discussion stood before them. He

looked with his usual magnificent calm from one to the other. He seemed but mildly interested.

"Come," said his father.

Alice cast one glance at his gallant retreating rear and ran up-stairs with her fingers in her ears.

They faced each other, father and son. The son was calm, the father nervous. The son smiled reassuringly. The father tried piteously to echo the smile. He didn't know how to begin. He was deeply embarrassed. The first words he spoke were not those he had meant to speak. They were:

"Hang it all, your mother ought to do this!"

This was a wrong opening. He covered it up by:

"You ought not to touch your Grandma's goldfish. We have told you time and again not to touch your Grandma's goldfish. You must mind your father and mother. All good little boys mind their fathers and mothers."

Robert looked at him unblinking and said nothing.

"Now," said Tom, "see what you've done. I've got to spank you so that you won't touch those fish again."

He felt in a false position. He was angry at the world, especially as all Robert did was to say dreamily:

"I like a goldfish."

"That may be," his parent replied. "You can't have them. Now I've got to spank you. Do you know why I've got to spank you, Robert?"

"Because I like a fish," replied Robert.

For the first time Tom understood why people in ancient times beat their breasts under the stress of emotion. "I'll get this over," he thought. He laid Robert over his knee. Robert was unresisting. His fat legs hung down one way, his fat arms hung down the other. He lifted his head up like a turtle and looked inquiringly at his father.

"This is awful!" thought Tom. On that plump and trusting rear he administered three half hearted taps, at which Robert wept, not loudly but heart-rendingly, and climbing up on his father's knee he ducked his soft canary-colored head in his father's neck, turning to the author of his discomfort to be comforted. They always do this when they are little—they are so accustomed to have you kiss them and make them well. It would be easier if they didn't.

Alice was upstairs crying. She turned her red eyes on Tom and asked in a whisper, "Is it over?" And Tom, whose nerves were overstrung, snapped:

"One would think that Robert had been having a major operation. Now he knows what will happen if he does it again. Next time you'll have to Do It."

"Next time?" Alice quavered.

"You've got to see it through, you know. It's only fair to him," said Tom, leaving for the office.

Alice knelt down in front of Robert and pleaded with him. She held him in her arms and begged him not to make Mother spank him. She looked at him searchingly, expecting to see in his eyes temper or humiliation, but neither was visible. He replied with his usual engaging ardor to her kisses, but on the subject of the goldfish he was silent. From time to time Alice paused in her work to find Robert, to kiss him, because the brutal hand of his father had been laid on him in punishment. Robert himself seemed unmoved.

Happily, Alice was having friends to lunch next day, so that she was too busy to dwell morbidly on the crisis through which they had passed. They were half through their luncheon when from the other part of the house came sounds of strife. One could hear the voice of an older person raised in remonstrance. One could hear the voice of Robert. Then came the sound of feet

running, and Robert, flushed and tearful with the excited tears of victory, stood before them. In one hand he held a flapping goldfish. He advanced on his mother and lifted up his skirts indecorously around his fat legs, turning his back to her.

“Spank me now,” he gasped. “I got it!”

CHAPTER III

WHAT are you to do with a child who measures the thing it wishes to do with punishment, and finding the price of punishment small deliberately makes his choice? There's not much to be done, is there? Tom got out of it this way:

"If we spank him he will look upon our punishment as revenge." And when Alice asked: "Well, if he wants to do something that will hurt him, what are you going to do then?" Tom answered with a finality that did not hide the weakness of his position:

"We shall find some better way of reasoning with him. This steadfastness of his, is a splendid thing if rightly directed."

When Alice asked how he proposed to direct it rightly he left for the office. Meanwhile Robert sat smiling serenely. His calm mouth was shut with a firmness that must always have been there and that Alice had never before noticed. He had an unshakable quality, a determination that defied them. Nothing but annihilation could subdue him. He was tiny, but he was stronger than they, for he knew exactly what he ought to do in life, and they, poor things, were uncertain.

Because of such trivial things as his Grandma's gold-fish, Robert had already shown them that when it came to a show-down he held the trump card of independence.

The complacent look went from their faces. They no longer talked evenings of how badly other people brought up their children. For they began to realize

the truth on which all the wisdom of parenthood is built, that the supreme thing which matters in the bringing up of your children is not following this theory or that. The thing of deepest importance is for you to try and find out as soon as possible who your baby is, for if you do not do it yourself he will make you. But it takes more than one child to teach this lesson, just as it takes more than one child to give a parent humility.

CHAPTER IV.

IT took Howling Sara to give perfect humility to Alice and Tom. She was born when Robert was three.

"Now," thought Alice, "I will correct all the mistakes I made with Robert. I know how to be a better mother now."

Tom, also, believed he had learned a little about being a father. When Sara was a little baby they spent no time in talking about what good parents they were. They had gotten to the point when parents talk about Development, and Spontaneity, and Co-ordination. This was all very well, except that they made plans again without allowing for X, which one may let represent Sara's personality. Robert gave them the first lesson concerning it. He was at closer quarters with it and no theories dimmed the clearness of his observation.

There was no doubt about it, Sara cried more than Robert had—it would be more strictly true to say she howled more. She acted as the book said babies didn't act when they were well. She howled over nothing. She had moments of sheer unreasonable howling which nothing would stop. If you picked her up she howled, and when you set her down she howled more. When on one of these occasions Alice in anguish asked the nurse:

"Oh, what do you think is the matter? Why do you think she's crying?"

"She's just mad," Robert explained. "When she's mad she yells. When she stops being mad she stops yelling."

There you had the reason. For no other cause on earth but temper—eating well, sleeping well, no excuse in life for it—Sara for two or three days would fill all the earth with her clamor. Then the storm would go by and the nursery would again be pleasant with the sweet noises of happy children. It didn't happen often, but these "spells," as her grandmother called them, would come with the suddenness of tropical storms. They often speculated "Where she got it from," but though she had red-headed and hot-tempered ancestors there was no one who had had this cyclonic quality. There was nothing one could do; no way to please Sara. If the storm happened in mid-street you could but hurry her home, so that at least she might do her howling in private. Leaving her alone to cry it out did no good. Humoring her did no good. When she began to talk, reasoning did no good. Scolding her did no good. Nothing did her any good. Robert told her what he thought about it when she was two years old.

"She's a bad girl," said he, "and ought to be spanked."

"Mercy, Alice!" said Tom's mother, "don't spank the child. Violent as she is, she'd be liable to break a blood vessel, crying."

"Of course I sha'n't spank her," said Alice.

The Mooted Question had been answered forever for the Marceys. No spanking in that family. It humiliated the Spanker. It degraded the Spankee. There wasn't anything the Marceys could say bad enough about spanking. It was the resort of the weak. It was a confession of failure. Children needed spanking only in homes where there was no true discipline.

Here we come to a dark page—one without a moral, one that holds even an immoral in its somber web.

It had been a terrible afternoon. Laurie was out.

Sara had been howling for two days. When she was a little baby one could stand it. Now that she could talk it seemed unbearable. If asked what was the matter, she screeched with rage. When Alice washed her face she screamed. Alice had left her on the bed a moment and told Robert to watch her. When she came up-stairs again she heard Robert saying:

"There, darling, there," in the tone of a dove, while Sara, her face red, her curls bobbing, her finger pointed at Robert, screamed at him,

"GO! GO!" and this because he was keeping her on the bed, as he had been told to. Then Sara leaned forward and slapped Robert. She slapped him twice. Robert turned a patient, smiling face toward his mother.

"She does this when she gets mad," he explained. Red anger arose in Alice.

"You're a bad, naughty baby," she said, and here for good and all did Alice Marcey lose her complacency, for she picked up the screaming Sara, put her over her knee and spanked her smartly.

She did the unpardonable thing. She spanked a little helpless child in anger.

The howls of Sara subsided. She sobbed a little, pathetically and limply. Then she murmured:

"Sweet Mother." She kissed her mother. "Sweet buddie," she murmured, "sweet Bobby." She kissed Robert. She was a reformed infant. She wanted to kiss all the world. She swam in a sea of benevolence. When Alice dressed her and took her out of doors she fell to picking little nosegays of wild flowers, which she presented to Laurie and then to her mother. She was sweeter than honey in the honeycomb.

In the domestic life figs do sometimes come of thistles. Alice had struck her child in anger and, lo, an angel was born on earth, nor did Sara howl again—not for

months. And when she howled again Alice spanked her, humbly, not knowing the why of it, only knowing that for some mysterious reason Sara would howl until spanked, or until "the spell" wore itself out.

CHAPTER V

IT was things like this that made them reserve judgment about Jamie who was born not long after. By the time he was two and a half, Alice had become a humble parent. She had changed from her attitude of the beneficent providence in the home, to an observer. Instead of saying "Let there be Light!" in a grand way, or "Let there be Order!", or "Let there be Clean Faces!", she tried to understand the why of things. She began to understand that children aren't like plants. The same course of treatment doesn't get the same results.

You can divide parents into two classes—the humble and wistful ones, who like Tom and Alice wonder how much they can find out about their children; and those around whom still lingers the assumption of Divine Rights of Parents.

Some mothers, as soon as they come near their children, pounce on them and set about, as briskly as possible, making them good. Indeed, there are still a great many mothers who spend all their time making their children over into different kinds of persons from the sort they were born. This is hard on both of them, and the only thing that happens is that the child grows a shell to keep his mother out, and grows up inside it in peace, but not nearly as nice and big as if he hadn't any shell—shells are cramping things at best.

Not all parents do this, but there is hardly a parent living who does not greet his children with:

"Good gracious, child, how dirty you are!" There are some babies who walk hesitatingly forth into the understanding of speech only to hear, "Oh, what dirty little hands!" It must be a disappointment if you have been eagerly listening and listening to find out what your mother meant by the words she spoke.

Indeed, if it were not for tooth brushes, soap, hair brushes, baths, and table manners, parents and children might often have a wonderful time getting to know each other; but these things stand between them until the children are as old as their mothers and fathers, and then generally it is too late. For when you've spent fifteen years, or twelve years anyway, hardly being able to get at your parents except over a rampart of tooth brushes, and shoe blacking, the doors of communication get rusted from disuse. I often wonder children don't turn on us with:

"Now, I don't want to hear you say 'tooth brush' to-day," or, "Any parent that speaks of hand-washing, or hair-brushing, or eating fast, has got to leave the table."

There are, however, a few mothers who are forever wondering what their children are really like. They wonder this so hard that they sometimes even stop talking about baths and going to bed so they can watch. These mothers are forever on the alert to catch some word or sign sent to them from the place where the children live. For the moment parents are out of the way, children's talk is different; their very voices, their words, their looks, all change.

Alice was always snooping on the edge of this place, straining her eyes to see what went on. At night when she tucked the children in she was especially watchful, hoping to surprise a confidence as it scuttled past her. She gathered up stray words they dropped and put them

away carefully; and then she would spend afternoons trying to put together the words and all the things she had learned in a sort of pattern. If one learned enough about them she thought one might really begin to be a good mother.

She learned after a while that every child's mind is a wild, trackless place, with little trails wandering about it, down which thoughts can walk. But as thoughts make different kinds of tracks in different children's minds, learning to find your way about one will help you hardly at all with another. The only thing to do is to sit quiet and watch, as one would for shy wild things in the forest. Then, if you make no grown-up noise at all perhaps some day you will see a thought from The Other Side come out. You may even have the good fortune to see them come out singing and dancing like motes in the sun. Some un-grown-up mothers have even got to know by sight the mysterious playmates that come to children from The Other Side. For want of a better name this was what Alice called the place where children live their real lives.

Alice had a theory that each of the children had another personality. When she tucked them in at night she made shy little approaches toward The Other One. At night, indeed, when she sat close to the bed with her face in her hands and the light making a golden ring around her hair, any one who didn't know her well wouldn't have guessed her for a grown-up. She had the same calm, serious look in her eyes that children as young as Jamie have, and there is no look more disarming to the Other Ones than that; and nothing that sends them away quicker than a grown-up smile lurking in grown-up eyes.

CHAPTER VI

IT is astonishing how quickly The Other One learns to hide. If you even glanced at Jamie when he went to The Other Side he knew it and came back even though he was only two and a half.

Alice knew that he danced to himself in the glass. She had found it out one day when he had forgotten that she was in the room, and she saw him jigging to himself. He held his hands above his head, fluttering them in time to one of those rhythms to which babies are forever beating time, that are forever ringing in their ears. Sometimes he took chubby dance steps and again he jigged up and down from the knees but not moving his feet at all. He was as absorbed as a scientist and as serious as if dancing were a religious rite. A solemn joy shone from his face. Then presently, without remembering his mother, he sat down on the floor and picked up a shoe and played himself a rhythm which went: "TAP, tap tap—TAP, tap, tap—TAP, tap, tap, tap."

She spied on him after that and would find him dancing before the glass, keeping time to the music she couldn't hear. But if he heard her footstep first—he would pretend to be about something else. Often she would hear him beating out his mysterious rhythms. Often, forgetting himself, he would absent-mindedly play them with a spoon on the table during mealtimes.

Alice so loved the spectacle of this dance that she would play foot-compelling airs on the piano never look-

ing around. She would be rewarded by hearing him jiggling away behind her. She had a triumph the day he tugged her by the skirt, and when she followed unresisting he towed her to the piano without speaking a word. That day she kept faith with him and never so much as glanced sidelong from the corners of her eyes. After a long time he became so tame that Alice could turn around if she did it unobtrusively and shyly enough—if you act embarrassed before them it sometimes helps—and that was one of the days when she felt a decoration had been given her.

Of all the children Robert was the most mysterious. You would never have suspected him of such things as going to The Other Side at all. He was matter-of-fact in his manner, and when inclined spoke beautiful English, ornamented with long and carefully chosen words, many of whose meanings he understood, and all of which sounded well.

By this time his attitude toward his sister Sara did not differ from that of most brothers. He was censorious and hectoring in his manner toward her. But in his heart of hearts he yielded a sullen respect to that fiery child. Besides, he loved her tenderly, and not only endured her tumultuous affection but he kissed her as often as he allowed her to kiss him, until he went to school and learned that a boy unsexes himself when he kisses his sister.

He was the last boy in the world one would have expected to have anything like two voices. Time and again when he was little Alice would hear him playing with another child. The other child had a high, rather plaintive voice, almost like a girl's. Robert from babyhood had had a resonant boyish voice. From a distance Alice would hear these two children conversing together. She had heard them playing outside. She had

heard them playing in the nursery when it seemed unlikely that Robert would have a friend with him.

The first time that the true state of affairs really pricked itself into her consciousness was one day when she had been giving Robert his bath. She left the bathroom, and as she shut the door the familiar treble voice sounded in her ears and Robert's voice in answer; and the treble voice again and then Robert's. A stranger would have sworn that two children were playing there in the tub together, and yet Alice knew there was but one child and that child was Robert.

After that she heard them often and yet she never surprised them together. Robert never forgot she was in the room. She would hear them talking after Robert had been put to bed, but silence greeted her when she came in. She never caught a word that The Other One said. Once only she almost surprised them, coming in quietly as she did, and when she asked Robert,

"What were you playing, dear?" he answered,

"Nothing," and kicked both his feet with embarrassment. Then when she insisted in a disarming voice,

"But you were playing something," he hid his head in the pillow for greater security, although it was already dark, and when she urged her smoothest,

"Tell Mother," he murmured in a suffocated voice,

"I was an angel, and I was in the angel cage on top of the ship."

She figured it out later that angels had to have cages because of their wings. The angel cage was the only glimpse she ever got of what went on behind her back, until much later.

In the street, however, she would sometimes come upon Robert, who at home was so serious and good-mannered, his face alight with a deviltry unknown to her, a swaggering, bullying, roystering spirit shining

through him that was as foreign to her as though she had never seen the child before. She knew for a fact that he could put both his hands behind his ears and waggle them in so exasperating a fashion that every little girl who beheld him screamed and stuck out her tongue, and every little boy went into fits of joyful laughter and tried to imitate Robert's gesture; but not even in the nursery at home was he ever known to waggle hands behind ears. Certainly not in his home had he got the special inspiration such a gesture required.

This was not all. As he grew older Alice became conscious of a curious throbbing, chuffing noise. It was as though she heard an engine.

"Chuff, chuff, chuff!" it would go; "chucc, chucc!" It was a cautious, secretive engine and, grown-up and a mother as Alice was, she knew by instinct that it was a different make altogether from the ordinary steamboat or car noises with which every well-regulated nursery abounds. All she knew was that it emanated from Robert, and somehow or other she also knew that it was a noise from The Other Side. It became more evident when Robert's best friend, William Travers Jenkins, was in the house.

Alice and Mrs. Jenkins discussed it. "What are they up to?" Mrs. Jenkins wanted to know. "I can't tell you," said Alice. She had got far beyond the point of asking Robert such foolish things as, "What are you playing, dear?"

CHAPTER VII

SARA was more openwork. You got all sorts of glimpses about what she was up to, especially if you took the trouble to listen to the tuneless chants which she was forever singing. She sang to herself hours at a time things like:

"My mama, oh, she's bee-yu-ti-ful; oh, she's bee-yu-ti-ful. She's got gold teeth. Big long dangly golds in her ears." (Spoken colloquially.) "You know, like John the peanut man's wife." (Sung.) "Two, free times as long, my mama. An' wouldn't you like to go out ridin' all day in the trolley? My papa he rides around all day, for he's a trolley man. He takes me along. Oh, my mama's got gold, gold teeth." (Spoken defiantly.) "And when I grow up, Robert Marcey, all my teeth's goin' to be gold, too."

It used to make Alice quite ashamed that in real life she had no long ear-rings and not so much as one gold tooth, and that Tom was a mere business man.

So Sara chanted to herself continually. She would chant:

"Robert's a bad, bad boy. They ought to spank 'm good. He's gone off with Uncle Zotsby! Old Uncle Zotsby-hotsby. Old Hotsby Totsby." At this Robert would cry:

"Shut up!" This chant of hers disturbed and embarrassed him. "Leave Uncle Zotsby alone," he would cry savagely. "He'll set his dog on you!" Serious altercations occurred over Sara's treatment of Uncle

Zotsby. Robert, usually serene, usually the one to do the teasing, was here most vulnerable. But why the name of Uncle Zotsby should be so crucial Alice could not find out. When she would ask Robert:

"Who's Uncle Zotsby?" he would blush furiously. If she asked Sara, Sara would turn the subject with ingenuity. Turning the subject was one of Sara's talents and she loved to display it. Alice had to take Zotsby or leave Zotsby, but she couldn't find out who Zotsby was. She had never even so much as heard the name in her life until it came into her nursery, bringing warfare and destruction in its train. She got to the point that when she heard a certain sort of scuffle occurring she would call out, "You children stop fighting about Uncle Zotsby at once," or "I won't have Zotsby's dog bothering Sara." It was very humiliating to a mother to have the peace of her home disturbed by a name, and especially a name like Zotsby.

CHAPTER VIII

BY listening hard to the chants of our children we may find out not only The Other Side, we may find out how the world looks to them, though Alice felt that Sara sometimes mixed up things just for the sake of dramatic effect. And she distinctly didn't approve of a chant with which Sara soothed Jamie when she pretended that he was her very own baby; and Sara chanted it in a churchly sort of way, too:

"In comes, in comes the Holy Ghost;
In comes the Holy, Holy Ghost,
A-walking on his hind legs."

Alice was sure that she had never had the Holy Ghost thus represented to Sara, and yet Alice had to pretend not to hear for fear of frightening Sara and making her as mysterious as Robert. But it was hard work to keep quiet because, unlike most children, Sara was born irreligious and scoffing and Alice felt that she sang things like this purposely. It was also through the medium of chants that Alice learned first about Evelyn Dearie.

All mothers who know about them at all are more interested in the companions who come from The Other Side to play with their children than in anything else. Sometimes you'll be sewing and the room all of a sudden gets still and then your baby begins a whispered conversation, until it seems that from one mo-

ment to another the invisible child to whom he is talking will step out from the shadows and be there in the room with you.

Alice could never quite believe in the unreality of the two voices. It seemed to her that the child with whom Robert played had always whisked himself out of the room just in time to prevent her seeing him. It was as though you could feel his presence; as though, like the children in story books, he had an invisible cap to pop on his head the moment Alice came in, and she could almost hear him snicker at the joke he was playing on her.

Now in this world it is never wise to meddle with such things. It's better to leave them as they are. No one ever had any good come to him from fraternizing with too great familiarity with the unknown; and it's a very good thing that the children from The Other Side are as shy as they are, as Alice found out through Evelyn Dearie.

She learned through Sara's songs that Evelyn Dearie was Sara's Other Side friend. By keeping quiet Alice was rewarded by hearing Sara cautiously calling:

"Evelyn, Evelyn Dearie!"

Sometimes, children's most delightful fancies have their roots in black dirt. It was through Laurie that Alice identified the fairy child of make-believe with the Evelyn Dearie in real life.

One would like to be poetical in talking about these make-believe children, but the truth was that the real Evelyn Dearie lived down the street and was a fat, unlovely girl who was swung perpetually in a hammock. Laurie spoke thus of her:

"It's broke is my heart with 'Evelyn Dearie this' and 'Evelyn Dearie that,' an' how came 'Evelyn Dearie' to stick in Sara's head I can't tell you, Mis' Marcey. I

was walkin' along, and there in her hammock sits Evelyn as fat as Mrs. Mullen's pig, and dressed up in a peekaboo waist, fitting her like a bolster, and under my nose she calls to Sara, and Sara in spite o' me runs in ahead, an' she give her a peanut. An' right then and there her young man up and kisses her in broad daylight. An' 'Evelyn Dearie,' says he, an' there stands Sara, her mouth as wide open as if to swallow an oyster. An' out of her mind Evelyn Dearie won't go."

Perhaps it was because of the origin of her name that Evelyn Dearie was less shy than other make-believe children.

For a while she hovered around the edge of the family circle. She made especially free of the nursery and of Alice's room. Alice, deluded woman, encouraged this. She even felt flattered when Sara would ask her,

"Do you mind if Evelyn Dearie lies down in your bed a little while? She feels tired."

Finally, after these tentative entrances into reality, Evelyn suddenly broke down all barriers, and not in the way to make Tom Marcey recognize her poetic value.

Tom came home tired from his office. He was about to seat himself in his accustomed chair when Sara gave an ear-piercing shriek. Sara was a very accomplished shrieker.

"Oh!" she screamed, "don't sit down there, don't, don't sit down there!"

A bystander would have supposed that a child was being flayed alive. Tom jumped up and looked apprehensively behind him. The chair was empty. He started to sit down again.

"O-o-o-oh, you're sitting down on Evelyn Dearie!" cried Sara. "Evelyn Dearie's in the chair! Don't do it!"

Alice gave her husband a look which means—"Do

what you're told without argument." He sat down in another chair. When Sara had gone Alice explained to him who Evelyn Dearie was.

"Now she's begun it," he said with sour cynicism. "I'll bet I'll never be able to sit down in a chair in comfort without hearing her squawk that I'm sitting on Evelyn Dearie."

So it proved. Evelyn Dearie had an unfortunate way of being in the chair that one wanted. Tom scandalized Alice by saying,

"You've got to tell Evelyn Dearie to keep out of my big chair. If Evelyn doesn't want to get squashed tell her to keep out!"

CHAPTER IX

EVEN Alice had to admit that when Evelyn Dearie fell sick with measles and elected for her bed of pain the library table, life became well night unendurable. Tom told Sara sternly that Evelyn would have to go up to the nursery. Alice would take her up to the nursery, but all in vain. Evelyn would be back in the library again and with her Sara with her professional:

"Hush, you'll disturb Evelyn Dearie; she's very sick. They make too much noise up in the nursery," she explained to her father; "she can't ever get well up there." Indeed, during these last days William Travers Jenkins had been often to the house, and the chuff-chuffing noise was even more audible.

"I can't keep the boys quiet, they won't stay quiet," said Sara stamping her foot, "and Zotsby's horrid dog is all over the place." But she could keep visitors quiet. She hushed them alarmingly, and a report went over the town that Jamie was having surreptitious measles. When Tom went to business this report assailed him on all sides. He came home angry.

"This nonsense has got to stop," he told Alice and Sara. "Evelyn Dearie has got to stay in the nursery."

It was Alice with her own hands who took Evelyn there amid the sobs and protests of Sara. A loud chuff-chuffing came from the nursery. It was stilled on Alice's entrance.

"You boys have got to keep quiet," Alice told them.

"Evelyn will be well in a day or two. Until then we've got to have quiet."

"I wasn't making any noise," said Robert.

"I wasn't," said William Travers.

"I heard you," said Alice, but here one of Sara's tropical tempests raged through the nursery. She stamped her feet.

"You take your old Uncle Zotsby away," she said, "him and his dog! I won't have him here with Evelyn Dearie. He's not my Uncle Zotsby, he's only your Uncle Zotsby! He's got steam engines inside him instead of real insides like us. He tells William and Robert how the world's made. Take him away." But here Robert cried in fury:

"You stop, you stop, you shut up!"

He might have even committed the crime of striking his sister had not his mother intervened. She knew what an outrage it was against his spiritual modesty. She knew that face to face and hostile stood her children's playmates from The Other Side. It was a critical moment.

Into the silence Robert said, "*Now you'll never know the name of Uncle Zotsby's dog!*"

"I'm going to take you out to walk with me," Alice said quietly to Sara.

"Who'll take care of Evelyn Dearie?" asked Sara.

"Your father," answered Alice brazenly. She paid no attention to Robert's scarlet face. She might not have heard anything of Uncle Zotsby or his dog, but just the same her heart was bleeding for Robert.

"We're going out," she told her husband, "and you'll have to take care of Evelyn while we're gone." Tom was so acquiescent as to arouse his wife's suspicions. But Sara was relieved. With father she felt

that all was well. When they returned Tom met them with a long face.

"I'm sorry to tell you," he said, "that while you were gone Evelyn Dearie died. She died very quietly. There's no use crying about it, Sara, it couldn't be helped. You shouldn't have let her have the measles."

CHAPTER X

SARA'S lip quivered. Great tears came to her eyes.
"Dead?" she quavered.

"Dead!" said Tom.

"My Evelyn Dearie *dead?*" she cried, her voice pierced with anguish.

In a voice of less assurance: "I am sorry, but it is so," Tom agreed.

"My child, my Evelyn Dearie!" answered Sara.
"Where is she? Show her to me."

Tom indicated the library table.

"Oh, my Evelyn Dearie!" cried Sara. "My Evelyn Dearie!" She threw herself face down on the floor and burst into sobs. "Oh, Evelyn Dearie; oh, Evelyn Dearie, what made me leave you!"

It was a disconcerting moment. Tom felt like a murderer.

"Well," he said apologetically to Alice, "I couldn't have her on the library table forever, could I? The library table is no place for an invisible child to be sick with measles. Something had to be done."

"Something's got to be done now," said Alice. "Look at Sara. She's going to break a blood vessel."

"Sara," said Tom. "Sara dear." But from Sara came only the long shuddering, "Oo-oo" of a mother mourning her dead child. "Sara, we'll have to do something about Evelyn; we'll have to take her off the table," said Tom. Sara kept on sobbing. "When people are dead you have to bury them," Tom told her.

Sara sat up. Her face was blotched with tears. "Bury them up?" she inquired cheerfully. "Can I have a funeral?" A light of interest shone in her tear-dimmed eyes.

"Certainly a funeral," said Tom.

"Hearse?" she said. "Carriages?"

"Hearses with plumes on them," said Tom. "Black ostrich feathers." There is no limit to such things when they exist only in the invisible world.

Sara jumped up. "Jamie!" she called. "Jamie! Robert! Come on! Evelyn's dead and we're going to have a funeral."

From out behind the house came a careful "Shuff Shuff; Chugg Chugg." It was Uncle Zotsby telling William Travers Jenkins and Robert how the world was made.

"Robert, don't you want to come? You can bring Uncle Zotsby."

A voice that Alice didn't recognize replied, "I can't come, and Robert can't come, and Bill can't come, but I'll send Uncle Zotsby's dog. He'll dig the grave for you—dogs dig fine graves."

CHAPTER XI

WHAT with people from the Other Side straying in the daily adventures in life handed out to Alice were more exciting than any other adventures of the spirit which life had offer. She found what people called the "monotonous domestic life" often nerve-racking; it played over all the emotions from comedy to the blackest tragedy. It was funny and pathetic—everything in its diversity but dull. Its fault was that of being too absorbing, for whenever one wanted to take a vacation into the calm spaces of the outer world, from the crowding emotions which it was forever giving you, it would pull you back by handing you one of those absorbing adventures which it was forever preparing. That was why neither Tom nor Alice could endure conversation which began, "How do you stand the monotony of domestic life?"

Friends would ask in a tone of pity, "Don't you find Shoreham dull after having lived in New York?" Or a friend from his bachelor days would ask Thomas Marcey:

"Well, Marcey, who would have expected to see either you or Alice so domestic!"

Talk like this would have made Alice gnash her teeth if she had known how. It was her mother-in-law, however, who was proud of having had but one child, who aroused Alice's temper the easiest. The elder Mrs. Marcey was forever mourning:

"Oh, my dear, I hope that Jamie will be the last! Three children, and the oldest only eight, are really too

much!" Or, "When I think of how children shut a mother up——"

There were times when Alice's former chum, Sue Grayson, exasperated her almost as much as did her mother-in-law. She would come to call, bringing her only child and crying,

"Well, how you manage it I don't know! Gladys is enough for me. And the expense!"

It was when baited beyond endurance by talk like this that Alice asserted,

"I think that three children is a miserable little family. I want at least two more."

She said this before Sue Grayson and her mother-in-law and she said it defiantly. Alice's hair was red, and she had a high and sparkling temper. Sue Grayson rested an uncomprehending gaze on Alice, such a gaze one rests on a lower animal, a rabbit or a guinea pig, for instance.

"Enough is enough," said she definitely if cryptically. "Impassed in domesticity, what becomes of a woman's higher spiritual nature? It dies. The spiritual nature, to continue to exist, must have adventure."

It annoyed Alice to the point of wishing to stamp feet not to be able to explain what she felt to these two superior women.

Her mother-in-law murmured with austere self-congratulation:

"I could never bring myself to call but one human soul from the unknown!"

Only her early training prevented Alice from crying "Bosh and rubbish!" while from childhood there rushed over her a desire to snap her fingers and stamp her foot which, when you are young, is a satisfactory way of expressing the emotion of anger. When her mother-in-law spoke about the unknown, and her friend

openly pitied her for being what is known as "tied down so," you were at the point where Alice became infuriated.

No one could guess that the loud and angry roar of Sara which reached the parlor with a shocking volume of sound, rang up the curtain on a new phase of the domestic drama. At this noise Alice said:

"Excuse me. I must see what the matter is."

She found Sara, in a highly satisfactory temper. Sara was shaking her red-gold curls and stamping her feet. She was screaming, too.

"Darling angel," thought her mother. "Scream while you can and stamp your feet while you can. Soon enough you'll be grown up and have to be polite. Soon enough you will have to swallow your indignation."

Robert sat with protecting arms around Jamie, who in faithful imitation of his serious-minded Scotch nurse, wagged his finger at his screaming sister, saying self-righteously:

"No, no; naughty!"

Robert told his mother the cause of the trouble in a shocked voice:

"She almost slapped the baby!"

"Poor darling!" cried Alice, embracing not the baby but Sara. Sara, grateful for sympathy, wept quietly into Alice's shoulder.

"Bad girl," Jamie remarked solemnly.

"Yes, she is," cried Robert.

"Both of you boys stop nagging Sara," commanded Alice. She soothed her daughter. The tense atmosphere of the nursery relaxed. Alice made no attempt to inquire into the cause of trouble.

"I'll take Sara with me," said she smiling at her two sons as if it were a favor for them to lend Sara

They both looked at her so pleasantly boyish that she ran back to kiss them. Their agreeable appearance must have also appeared to Sara. She ran after Jamie, her "own sweet baby." She put both her arms around him and almost strangled him in her close embrace.

No one in this little world was surprised at the sudden change from anger to love. No one wanted explanations; no one wanted to fix blame and have punishment meted out. It is grown people who teach children to take satisfaction in one another's punishment. This absence of the judicial frame of mind was one of the attributes of childhood which most charmed Alice. Refreshed, she speeded her guests on their way.

CHAPTER XII

SHE told Tom about it all as soon as he came home. "What the matter with the world is, is politeness," she asserted. "I smile at people when they talk like that until my mouth cracks. It would be good for all of us if I told Sue Grayson and your mother what I think of them. Oh, you should have seen Sara's boiling hot temper. I kissed her to see her so perfectly mad. I felt as if she were my own spirit, stamping its foot for me."

What was the matter with the world, or even what ailed his mother, troubled Tom Marcey but little. What the matter was with his children was of immense importance. He had been thinking about them on his way home. He had one of those moments common to all fathers when he had looked down into the bottomless pit of his responsibility. There was so little time to spend on them: there was so much to be done. He was in a mood to take Sara's roars to heart, so he naturally asked what the matter had been. Alice replied airily:

"I didn't inquire. Rob said that Sara was in an awful rage. She almost slapped the baby."

"I think that if Sara almost slapped Jamie and was in an awful rage she didn't deserve petting," Tom said judicially.

"She needed petting," Alice exclaimed with some heat. Alice's temper was always frail after an encounter with Tom's mother. "Those boys had exasperated her."

"How do you know" asked the Scientist on the Hearth, "when you didn't take the trouble to ask a question?"

"I didn't have to ask questions; I only had to look at Sara," responded Alice. "Why don't *you* ask her what the matter was?" she suggested. The suggestion was a malicious one, and Alice knew it.

"Sara, darling, come to Father," said Tom guilelessly. "What were you crying about?"

"Did you brang something for me?" inquired Sara.

"What did you cry for a little while ago?"

"I wasn't cwyng. Was I cwyng, Mother?" Candid innocence was in her earnest eyes. "I was a good girl."

Alice turned to the window and inspected the world with an appearance of abstraction.

"Didn't you cry at all?" Sara shook her head meditatively and looked pensively back into the past.

"I never cwyed yesterday," she brought out with profound conviction.

"I'm not talking about yesterday: I'm talking about to-day."

"She means by 'yesterday' anything that has happened," Alice explained without turning her head.

"But you did cry yesterday," Tom went on with patience. "Just a little while ago. Think." There was silence. Sara seemed to be peering back into remotest antiquity. She looked up at her father with confiding eyes. He smiled encouragingly. The illuminating words which Sara spoke were:

"I see a eenty, weenty bird in the tree!"

"Sara," pleaded her father, "don't think about birds: think of why you cried."

"All right," she agreed cheerfully. Anything to please Father. She frowned her brow engagingly.

"What for made me cwy? I cwyed because I just did—that's what for because."

"Her will-o'-the-wisp of a brain must do a few minutes' consecutive work now and then," Tom apologized to Alice, though he was beginning to feel like a pig. "Think, Sara, of the reason that made you cry."

Sara looked from one to the other; they towered above her, august but friendly. They were the two people toward whom her flooding affections flowed most readily. When they were displeased with her she wept. She wanted to be told as often as they would that they loved her. All day long, like a gay spring, she babbled terms of endearment. Hastily she turned her back on all difficult subjects. That was why she preferred birds as a topic of conversation to the unpleasant one of tears. She was a child of light, of a flowering, ardent nature, swift to anger, quick to tears and quickly back again to laughter. She played through this cycle many times a day. Emotion was the element in which she lived. Now her dear mother and father wanted something of her. They were both waiting, expectant. She would not fail them. Her searching eyes fell on the waving poplar leaves.

"What for did I cwy? I cwyed because the wind blowed in the trees."

She gave it out so sparkling and triumphant that no one would have had the heart to tell her that she wasn't a clever child. Her manner showed that she considered the incident closed, and with a burst of fireworks. Besides this, her father was laughing, and Sara laughed with him. She could tell by the way he laughed that she had been a clever child.

Everything would now have been well if Rob hadn't come into the room in time to hear her last words.

"That's not what made you cry," he asserted. "You

got mad. You were mad because you were selfish. You wouldn't let Jamie take the blocks. You were a bad girl."

Silliness in his sister irritated him, and his parents frequently laughed at sayings of hers which irritated him most deeply. He did not consider her a baby to be indulged, but a trying and flighty contemporary.

"When you know what you did," said Tom, "what made you talk about wind in trees?" Alice sighed. Her husband frowned.

When a child is five it certainly ought to have more responsibility, and it is hard for the masculine mind to tolerate such vagueness.

"I'll tell you why she didn't," Robert volunteered. What he considered the smirking expression of his sister's face annoyed him. "She was afraid you'd punish her for being bad to the baby. She never tells the bad things she does—never."

Indeed, she never did. Her one desire in life was to please. Far from the mind of Sara was the telling of anything disagreeable about herself. Such happenings dropped promptly into the bottomless pit of oblivion, or were translated into some one else's fault.

Robert spoke with bitter disapproval; telling the bad things he did was his long suit. He had only to tell his parents the truth about his worst sins to be treated with lenience. He had gotten to depend a good deal on this shining quality of his to get him out of scrapes. Like most brothers, he had but small opinion of his sister's intelligence, and even less since she failed to grasp so simple a fact. At his son's words Tom Marcey eyed his daughter gloomily.

"She has no memory and no logic," said he. "She hasn't the slightest conception of cause and effect."

It is talk like this from men concerning their children

that would drive young mothers to suicide were it not that consideration for their babies restrains them—for there is not a mother living who believes in her heart that her husband is fitted for the bringing up of young children.

Later Tom earnestly talked up the moral issue with Alice. He finally decided:

"That child has got to tell the truth!"

There are many men who would hesitate to say, "Come, my dear, she is small for her age and she must grow three inches by Tuesday week," who do say things like, "she must learn to tell the truth at once."

CHAPTER XIII

IT seemed only a moment after Tom had decided that Sara must tell the truth that Alice came into the sitting-room to find the goldfish bowl broken in a thousand pieces and the gasping fish beating themselves on the floor. The first thing was to rescue the fish. The next was to ask that mother's classic question:

"Who did this?"

Alice asked it in the silence of a deserted room, but she surmised that when goldfish lie flapping among the pieces of their broken bowl, children are not far off. Again she asked into the silence:

"Who broke the bowl?" and from under the table came Sara.

"'Twas me bwoke it," said this female Washington. That is what she seemed to her mother. That was what she seemed to her delighted father. His words seemed to have borne fruit already.

"How did it happen? How did you do it, darling?" they urged. Sara was prolific in detail.

"I runned up into 'em smash! Bang! Bang! I runned into 'em, I broke 'em. My, I broke 'em up!" She explained, it seemed to her mother, with an air of pride.

"Were you playing?"

"Yes; I was playing with a little girl."

"What little girl?"

"I don't know her name," Sara gave back guardedly. "She just came in. She's a bad girl." Sara stamped her foot and frowned at the bad little girl's villainy.

"She says, 'Sara, shove the goldfish,' so I shoved 'em! Hard! Then, smash, bang, all gone!"

It was a dramatic performance, but while Tom was saying that a household should be run so that strange little girls wouldn't come in unbidden, Alice had an unconvinced feeling about this child.

"Where's Robert?" she asked.

"Off cwyng somewheres," said his sister callously. Alice found him under his white iron bed.

"I didn't mean to kill them," he sobbed; "I didn't mean to. I just lifted it up to put it out of the sun and it slipped." But Sara, who had followed her mother and father, cried out hotly,

"You didn't do it, Robert Marcey! I did it. I broke 'em!"

"She's trying to shield her brother," said Tom. Alice gathered her son to her.

"They're not dead," she soothed. "Who was the little girl playing with you?"

"There wasn't any," said Robert. "Just Sara and me. It slipped, and when it went smash she laughed and jumped up and down. And we heard you coming and hid." But here the incomprehensible Sara gave way to temper. She wanted to have broken the bowl. She insisted on it with tears and rage.

Tom wanted to believe she did this to shield Robert. But Alice inclined to the belief, and Robert did too, that she thought smashing goldfish bowls rather a fine achievement.

Within the next day or two Sara piled up more evidence against herself. She loved adornment and it was hard to keep her from taking her mother's things.

Tom and Alice were sitting in the library next Sunday and Sara ran into the room. She was not looking for them, as she showed by clapping her hand over an old-

fashioned mosaic brooch of her mother's which reposed on her polka-dotted dress just above her stomach.

"Where did you get Mother's brooch?" asked Alice.

"Your bwooch?" questioned Sara blandly, clapping her hand over it.

"My brooch on your dress, Sara."

"On my dress?" asked Sara blankly, carefully surveying her extended hand, its five fingers wide apart. Tom tried another mode of attack.

"Take your hand off Mother's brooch," he said sharply.

"My hand?" asked Sara with grief. It was evident that she understood nothing of all this talk.

"Lift your hand up in the air, Sara," commanded her father. She lifted it up. Had the brooch just then flown down upon her like a bird and alighted in the middle of her person she could not have been a more surprised and bewildered little girl.

"Why, so 'tis!" she cried, deeply shocked.

It is an awful thing when an honest man realizes that his daughter is a natural-born liar; not only that, but a liar who lies with joy in the dramatic effect.

It was going to be a harder task than Tom imagined. If it were the fashion to write problem novels about things like this one could write one about the Truth and Tom and Sara.

"How do you make them tell it?" is the problem.

The material for the great scene in the third act is the clash of their two different life ideals. The scene of Tom sitting in a train taking Sara to New York to visit could be made heart-rending.

Sara sat behind her father with a kind fat lady, Tom with a man reading a paper. It could be a piece of fine acting to portray Tom's anguish at hearing Sara remark pleasantly to the fat lady:

"We got five white pigeons to our house."

"Have you, dearie?" said the fat lady.

"Pigeons and ducks—little eenty ones, just like in the book my Gramma gimme; and they'll swim an' swim around in my back yard. Little ducks, chickens, we got; gobble-obble-obs; ducks wiv long necks like in the park—every kind."

Alas! the truth was that the Marceys owned not so much as a canary bird. There was no place for a duck to swim within a mile and a half of their house.

"I'm goin' to get a little brover," pursued Sara. "I had one little bover. He growed up big. Now I'm go-in' to get another brover. P'rhaps a sister an' a brover."

This was the first intimation that Sara's father had of such news. But he had little time to ponder upon it. Sara, it seemed, had been merely giving her imagination a little trial spin when she invented a lake in the back yard, poultry of every kind, and a new brother. Now she started off with:

"My grandma's going to buy me a little woolly camel," and from there on she grew lyrical. There was nothing she didn't dare to tell the guileless fat lady, whom she must leave anyway in a few minutes and who never could ask her embarrassing questions in the future. Sara soared away, released from all confining realities. Now in the problem play Tom's face should have been contorted with anguish. This moment should have been one of the crucial ones, where Sara confirms his worst suspicions. But in real life we seldom live up to the histrionic possibilities which life presents us. In the face of Sara, the lyrical liar, Tom laughed.

CHAPTER XIV

THAT day at luncheon Sara opened a corner of her secret mind. It was one of those small happenings that pass unobserved at the time and whose significance is seen later. She was swinging her feet to and fro under the table. Playing with the dog, was what Sara was doing. The part of her visible above the table, sat up company, fashion and ate its food as well as could be expected, while her out-of-sight legs indecorously gamboled back and forth.

"Are you playing with the dog with your feet, under the table, Sara?" cried Alice.

"No," answered Sara. "Why, yes; I am, too."

"That's a good little girl to say you are," responded Alice encouragingly.

There was a moment's pause, and then Sara opened the door of her mind a crack by inquiring:

"Why was I a good little girl?"

One would think that she had worked crescendo through the whole cycle of lies. So far, however, Sara had been an artist. She seemed to lie for the sake of lying. From this Tom sometimes derived a sad satisfaction. He was inclined in these days to be pessimistic about his daughter. But he tried his hardest to overcome her tendency, for it hurts a man's self-esteem to have said, "Let there be light," and not have even a ray of dawn. So, several times lately Tom had taken Sara on his knees and had had conversations that went:

"You must always tell the truth, Sara dear." Sara nodded sagely. "I would rather have you do anything

than lie. Lying is worse than anything else. Do you understand? I would rather have you do *anything* than lie about it."

"What things?" Sara inquired with interest.

"Well, I'd rather have you selfish and hateful to the baby and well—have you act like a bad little girl, rather than have you lie."

"Would you rather I was dirty and say, '*No I won't!*' '*Yes, I will,*' '*I won't do it,*' and screech awful loud?"

"Indeed, yes. Those things are very naughty, but lying is worse. Whenever you start to say what isn't true, say to yourself, '*No. I won't lie.*' Say it over after Father."

"I'll say, '*No. I won't lie. I won't! I won't!*'" Sara emphasized this laudable sentiment by clapping one hand on the other and shaking her head.

"Don't ever be afraid to tell the truth."

"I am not afraid. I'm not a 'fraid cat. Jamie's a 'fraid cat, but I'm big." She seemed to have grown two inches.

"But you don't always tell the truth."

"Don't I?" she asked.

"Think. Do you?"

She regarded her father speculatively.

"Not every time," she said at last.

At the end of such an interview Tom would comfort himself by thinking that light was going to dawn. He had been working harder than ever over Sara ever since his mother—his own mother—had said:

"It seems to me you're making an awful to-do about Sara's fanciful ways. Lots of little children had just as soon lie as tell the truth, and later on outgrow it."

No young parent can fail to shudder at the laxity of such a sentiment, for when does one begin to inculcate the element of character if not in the very first years of

life? So Sara's laudable resolve was a balm to him.

She might have gone on improving had not the Williamses moved in next door, bringing with them a swing, a very big tea set, and a superior assortment of Teddy bears, and their daughters, one as old as Robert and another very little older than Sara. Sara would hang over the fence, saying, "I got a Teddy bear, too."

"Where we lived before we had rabbits, but we gave them to my auntie. You can't move rabbits when all the furniture has to go too."

"Why can't you?" asked Sara.

"Because your mama won't let you," the little girl, whose name was Tillie, replied with rather crushing finality.

Sara recovered with the statement, "Our Uncle Zotsby's got steam engine insides."

The next step in friendship was "Come over to my yard." "No, come over to mine," and then after polite conversation between mothers, a group of little girls playing in one yard or the other. Sara, however, under solemn promise of not going in the house next door without permission. It was now that Sara succumbed to that beguiler of childhood, "The House Next Door." Oh, lovely House Next Door! Oh, desirable house, spot toward which our footsteps turned. House so much more interesting than one's own house. House Next door, where grown-ups treat you with the consideration you deserve; house where the other children have to be polite to you; where it is to others that the words: "Be nice to your little friend; be a sweet, unselfish girl," are spoken.

All of us have bent our way toward that spot, and one of the very worst things about the city is that there can be, in the nature of things, no House Next Door.

CHAPTER XV

SARA haunted this forbidden paradise with impassioned pertinacity. It seemed to Alice that she never looked out of the window without seeing Sara wistfully hanging over the fence or sitting forlorn on the Williams's steps. Always she was peeping in through the front door to get a glimpse of the land beyond, of the forbidden country.

Alice was standing by the window one day. She saw the Williams children disappear in their house. She saw Tillie stand in the doorway, beckoning to Sara. Sara glanced furtively over her shoulder toward home and vanished inside the door.

As Alice walked toward her neighbors her step and bearing would have told any child with sense that here was an outraged parent. Even worse things awaited her. As Alice was passing some shrubbery Sara whisked out of the house again, looked toward home with that furtive look shocking to behold on so young a countenance, and by the time Alice arrived she was sitting in her accustomed pose, a picture of patient if mournful resignation. No one could have told she had moved. The only incriminating evidence was a lump in her cheek and crumbs on her lips.

"What have you got in your mouth, dear?" asked Alice with treacherous sweetness.

"A piece of cookie," answered Sara. She didn't take her head from her hands. She stared ahead of her stolidly.

"Where did you get it?"

"Tillie gave it to me."

"You know you oughtn't to eat between meals." ▲
nod. "Did you go in the house?"

A shake of the head.

"Not once? Speak out loud, Sara dear, and tell the truth."

At this with deep conviction Sara said:

"Not once in the house."

Sara had committed all the crimes of childhood at once in a broad reckless fashion. She had lied, she had disobeyed, she had eaten between meals. But she had sinned in a mean, sly spirit. When confronted with the truth she said Tillie had made her come in.

It was this that disgusted her parents.

Robert would have out with it like a man, whatever it was, they agreed.

Of course she had to be punished.

The next time she was allowed to go to the house next door she vanished again. When Alice went for her she ran toward her, saying blithely,

"I was in the house, Mother."

Alice didn't know what to do. Sara had disobeyed, but told the truth about it. Alice did not wish to nip the frail blossom of truth in the bud. Next day Sara vanished again.

"Oh, will she never learn!" cried her anguished mother.

Again by the time Alice got there, Sara was in the front yard.

"Were you in the house again?" cried Alice.

"Yes," replied Sara raising fearless eyes to her mother.

"What makes you say that, Sara," said Mrs. Williams from the window. "You weren't in the house. You haven't been in the house since your mother punished

you. She was playing behind the smoke tree with the other children, Mrs. Marcey."

Sara whose heart was at ease, ran to her mother, clasping her about the knee, with her little cry of:

"Mother, I love you." And at this moment the idea concerning Sara which had long been at the back of Alice's mind came out definitely into the sunlight. So much in the sunlight that it communicated itself to Tom, when Rob explained with scorn:

"Sara don't know anything! She asked me, 'Which way now ought I to say the truth—I *was in the house*, or I *wasn't—I forget.*'"

She, poor dear, was ready to say either. For a second Sara's father and mother had a glimpse into Sara's mind, and there is nothing harder to see into than the mind of a little girl just five years old. Some of the things they saw were:

"When my father and my mother laugh at me I have been good. When they frown at me I have been bad.

"The truth is saying, 'I have been in the house.' They are so glad you do it."

There were other sound pieces of logic like this, but both Alice and Tom Marcey now knew that the truth for Sara was "*Mother, I love you.*"

Facts had not begun to exist for her. Tom and Alice would have to wait a while until they did. In the meantime Sara was a slave. She was a slave to her flooding affections. The only thing of importance was to avoid giving her dear mother and father pain—and herself the pain of their displeasure. If she forgot and did things she had been told not to do of course she lied. For slaves always lie. It is only free men like Robert the Fearless who tell the disagreeable truth.

CHAPTER XVI

KNOWLEDGE about the Other Side is dangerous to the peace of minds of parents. So are glimpses into children's minds. If you get to know too much about people you get to know how they feel. If you know how they feel you cannot have the belief that you are always right. Such knowledge leads to such things as the Distressing Doubt.

Alice's Distressing Doubt was the heresy that it was perhaps she who was naughty instead of her children. This is a very complex way for a mother to feel. It is hard enough to bring up children with the old belief of the infallibility of parents to bulwark you. The Distressing Doubt not only took this belief from Alice, but it also bred a family of other doubts concerning goodness and badness, which shows that when you once leave the solid ground of tradition there is no end to the trouble that you may be giving yourself, for among all the doubts Alice even had one concerning her new point of view.

Alice was forced to admit that it wouldn't do to have too queasy a delicacy in bringing up children, and that the hard nature of childhood probably adapted itself better to the cheerful hardness of the old régime than it did to the uncertain quicksands of attempted understanding. In those days if a child itself did not know what was right and wrong it had ample opportunity of learning from its elders what they thought was right and wrong, every day and all the time. Their

ideas on these subjects never varied; obedience was obedience, and a lie was a lie.

Now she was even no longer sure any more what a good boy was and if she could only have decided that she would have been a happier woman and she certainly would have been a much happier mother. She looked back with envy upon that time before the coming of the Distressing Doubt, when her simplicity made it possible for her to pick out good children from bad children and good acts from bad acts. She saw other mothers doing that now and her own enlightenment made her scornful, while yet she envied them their calm security.

These women moved serene and goddess-like among their offspring, meting out praise and blame without the quiver of any emotion more disquieting than that of self-approval, and when their serenity became shaken, their wrath was the wrath of goddesses, since it had for a background the mighty force of trust in their own righteousness. This repose of conscience rested upon the mighty world-old belief, heritage of the ages, that of necessity Mothers were Right and Children were Wrong.

When in a moment of impatience Alice confided some of these doubts to Tom's mother for the pleasure of easing her own mind, she asserted that she believed that disobedience was often good for children.

"Hoity-toity," responded her mother-in-law, "if everybody were to go on talking like that what would become of discipline; what would become of the Home?"

To this Alice responded flippantly that she for her part did not care what became of it, and she often thought that the Home was the canker spot of our national life and that if one could only abolish Home—. When she got to this point her mother-in-law remarked that she knew where Sara came by her contrariness.

CHAPTER XVII

THIS discussion had been punctuated by the cheerful noises of laughing children. Now Sara's voice rose up shrill, while Robert kept up a never-ending chuckle; they were having that rough and tumble play known as "fooling." All the time that Alice was arguing, her subconscious went on unceasingly,

"You'd better stop them. You'd better stop them. This is no time for them to yowl." It was only because there was something Spartan in the depths of Alice's spirit that she didn't.

"Let her see them at their worst," she thought defiantly. "It's good for Sara to be toughened." So she waited, as one might await an unimportant yet nerve-racking crack of doom, for the inevitable howl from her daughter, the howl that almost always happens when little boys and girls play together.

Jamie was playing by himself. He played outside the circle of his older brother's and sister's interest, as oblivious of them as of his elders. He ran from a rose bush to a given spot, stamped his foot, ran in a circle around the spot and ran back to the rose bush. It seemed like a mysterious fairy play, as strange and unfathomable as his gestures were lovely.

Yet the sight of him failed to please his mother. Indeed, she hastily turned her eyes away when Mrs. Marcey remarked, "How sweetly he plays alone," for Alice knew only too well that Jamie was engaged in no mystical imaginings, no delicate play of childhood, but that he was glutting his innocent lust of slaughter.

Jamie was picking rose bugs from the rose bush, placing them on the stone and stamping them, one by one. Sara had taught him to do this, and since then this loathsome sport had been his favorite diversion. Alice dreaded the moment when his grandmother would gather her flowing draperies around her and say, "I must see what the little darling is doing."

Early childhood knows no good or bad, nor does it know clean or dirty. Or if it knows, it prefers dirty. Sweet pink and white childhood loves squashing rose bugs, cleaning fish and paddling in mud; it delights in all things squashy and sticky. There is nothing it resents more than enforced cleanliness, and Jamie was at an age to resent this with full-lunged bellows.

So between the three of them Alice was far from comfortable. That is the way with mothers, as long as they are within earshot of their children their subconsciousness peers ahead into the unknown, predicts disaster and foresees danger, keeping up such a clamor that the nerves grow brittle. Now with the arrival of Tom and some visitors, Alice forgot these subconscious warnings.

Jamie still ran in circles around the massacre of the rose bugs, and Sara and Robert were "fooling" like puppies. Robert's voice arose mocking:

"Don't you wish you knew the name of Uncle Zotzby's dog?"

"Ah, tell me, tell me," came from Sara.

"Oh, don't you wish you knew?"

"Really," said the elder Mrs. Marcey, "that Zotsby matter goes too far, frequently."

Indeed, Robert had an expression with which he would walk through a room, his mouth shut tightly, a provocative look in his eyes which meant "I have a secret." Now he openly taunted Sara. The wail of woe had not

yet come, but like an unseen presence Alice knew it was there, waiting.

At last it came, and Alice drew a sigh of relief at the long-drawn-out, expected cry of anguish and wrath, and eased her nerves.

"Has that rascal been hurting Sara again?" Tom wishes to know.

"Oh, it's nothing," Alice murmured, wishing they wouldn't investigate further. She knew so well what would happen; she knew also that Tom's mother could not let her grandchild shriek in vain.

"I'm going to find out," Tom insisted.

"They'll be all over it in a minute," Alice murmured.

"What's that got to do with it," Tom asked indignantly. "Of course she'll get over it. If that young ruffian broke her head open with an ax, she'd get over it—if she didn't die."

"I don't see why you always assume every thing's Robert's fault," Alice argued.

"I don't understand why you have no instinct to protect Sara," said Tom.

They faced each other, hostility smoldering between them.

Tom started rapidly for the hammock, Alice after him more sure than ever of her husband's inability to bring up children. By the time they got there the quarrel was over. Sara and Robert were a picture of brotherly and sisterly love, they sat side by side in the hammock, looking at a picture book. No parent would have disturbed them at this moment. Their grandmother asked, however:

"What hurt my dearie?" Tears filled Sara's beautiful eyes, filled but did not overflow.

"He," she cried, shaking her finger in the direction

of Robert, "he kicked me in the guts!" Her voice was tragic.

Robert arose; the wrath of misrepresented man was his. "Tattle-tale!" he said, "cry-baby! You know I only meant to kick you from behind."

It's not thus that one wishes one's children to speak in the presence of grandmothers or callers. The moment was awkward. One of the ladies tactlessly turned the subject with the air of cloaking some unsightly spectacle from view. No words were needed to tell the parents of Sara and Robert that terms like "guts" had never been mentioned in the family of these three ladies. But sympathy had done its devastating work on Sara. "He hurt me," she sobbed.

"I didn't mean to," Robert protested, his arms round his sister.

CHAPTER XVIII

THEY sat in the hammock, their arms around each other, explaining their altercation. They looked so sweet that in Alice's mind their uncouth language became charming. She considered the incident closed, but their grandmother didn't. Tom Marcey didn't think it was closed. His mother said—before every one:

"Something has got to be done about the language which those children use; where they hear such terms I can't imagine!" Then, with her eye on Jamie, who was still pursuing the slaughter of the rose bugs with the concentration of a two-and-a-half-year-old, once it finds a congenial employment, "I wonder why babies are so lovely in their bewitching little plays and become so vulgar as soon as they are older."

After the company had gone, Tom Marcey said, "Something has got to be done about Robert. A boy shouldn't kick his sister."

"They were only fooling," Alice protested weakly.

To this poor argument Tom paid no attention. "It should be instinctive in a manly boy," he said, "not to hurt his little sister. And as for kicks—" Tom's chivalrous spirit shrank before the idea of a brother so lost to decency that he could lift a kicking foot at his sister, even in play.

Alice made no answer to this statement either. History does not teach us that natural man finds any shrinking from lifting his hand to the females of his race. This theory of man's reluctance to hurt those of the

weaker sex has only come into its full flowering in the past few years. Man through the ages has hit, pummeled, and kicked woman when she proved recalcitrant, and often when she did not, and boy unchecked will do the same. Alice knew this; all mothers who are not willfully blind or sentimental know this, and when it happens just in play it doesn't seem worth while to pay attention to it—there are so many things one has to pay attention to.

Tom Marcey had no doubts concerning the righteousness of his views. Chivalry was what that hulking boy of his was going to learn, even if he had to be taught chivalry with a club. Alice heard him teaching it in tones of righteous indignation and she also heard Robert say indignantly:

"She told me to try and see if I could kick her when she ran past. How could I know she was going to turn around and light with her stomach on my toe?"

Her sympathies were all with Robert, especially when she saw Sara peacocking off with her father, her head affectedly on one side, the conscious virtue of self satisfaction radiating from her for having come out on top. Alice realized then and there how sex antagonisms had begun. She realized also why Cain killed Abel.

Sara was insufferable the rest of the day. She told her mother, before Robert, that she was a good girl.

She was nauseously good; she was as offensive as little heroines of our grandmothers' day, who prayed freely that their parents' souls might be saved.

"Jamie kills rose bugs, he squashes them," she remarked in superior accents. "I wouldn't!"

"You used to," grumbled Robert.

"I don't now," she replied, smiling sweetly.

"You did yesterday," said Robert.

Sara looked at yesterday as down a vista of years. She shook her head.

"I don't now," she repeated with maddening sweetness. "I don't get dirty and horrid when I play. Mother, do I?"

"Often!" responded Alice brutally.

"Oh, no, I don't," Sara contradicted in sirupy tones.

"That," said Alice fiercely to her husband, "is what you get by correcting one child before another."

"That is what I get?" he asked with the blindness of the male, "she seemed to me very charming."

This was more than Alice could bear. Sara had been ostentatiously affected, so affected that Alice longed to slap her, but Tom had drunk in all this sentiment, and apparently stood ready for more. What was the use of men, anyway, when they didn't know true affection from affectation? He could even reply pleasantly when she asked, "Aren't I a little angel, Father?"

There comes an end to all days, and no mother can deny that this had been a trying one. After everything that had happened, to have Sara turn sugary and superior was almost more than flesh could endure. The worst of it was that Sara was really being bad as anything, bad as Eve, and you couldn't say a thing to her; worse still, you couldn't do a thing to her. She was self-conscious, superior, affected, had an insufferable "I am better than thou" manner, toward Robert, was encased in an armor of vanity so thick that it could not be broken even by violence, and perfectly sure all the time that she was a good girl. Alice longed for the power to mete out some retribution to her as no naughtiness of Sara's had ever made her long.

Robert in disgust vanished from the scene and presently from a distance Alice heard a cautious "chugg chugging."

“There’s that Zotsby again,” said Sara. “He’s a horrid person. I don’t like persons with steam engine insides. I think steam engine insides are *vulgar*, don’t you, Mother? That’s why I wouldn’t have him at Evelyn Dearie’s funeral.—Though Evelyn Dearie was vulgar too—Laurie said so.” She minced off calling over her shoulder to Robert, “I wouldn’t listen to the name of Uncle Zotsby’s dog if you told me!”

CHAPTER XIX

WHEN the trying day finally came to an end Sara had the audacity to ask, "Do I need my bath. I've been so good?" Alice replied with a prompt asperity that was a great relief to her feelings:

"Indeed you do! You need one very much indeed!"

"But I have been so good," drawled Sara. "I've been a sweet child, haven't I, Father?" This sort of remark would annoy even the most deluded father.

"Yes, you have been so good," he replied with less spontaneity than he had shown, "and let's hear no more about it."

"About not bathing," Alice rapped out smartly.

"Aha!" cheered Robert. "You thought you'd get out of it."

"Don't nag your sister," his father advised him.

"Nag," thought Alice, "as if that honest child could nag!"

They were at the supper table when Sara came down from her bath. She wore no kimono over her night-gown; she had no slippers on her feet. She pranced in with the air of one who is naked and unashamed. Water, it seemed, had not washed her sins away, though it had melted off the outer veneer of virtue. It seemed that righteousness, after all, did not pay.

"Where are your slippers?" Robert inquired sternly.

"Upstairs," answered Sara, "and my kimono is up there, too," she went on, "and do you know why I left them? I left them upstairs because I wanted to! That's why I left them!"

CHAPTER XXI

THAT was the time when Alice began to realize that Robert was beginning to grow up.

One of the things that is the very hardest for mothers to find out is just how old their boy children are. The calendar and the clock have nothing to do with this, and it is partly the fault of parents that this is true. From earliest infancy they implore their boys to "be a man." That glorious goal is pointed out to a boy baby from the moment he can understand anything. He is not only told to "be a man" but to "be a man like Father." I often wonder how the fathers bear it; I often wonder how they can stand there, so smug and contented, when this ideal of conduct is suggested to their babies. Don't they really see themselves? Aren't there some of them who have a sudden, beneficent impulse to exterminate their own sons if the feat of growing up to be "a man like father" is all that awaits the child? How can they bear the adoring gaze of their sons?

Some little boys have a trick of looking so much more like real men with all the qualities that we love to think of as belonging to the most manly than grown-up men do. You see them stamping down the street, still in skirts; a man in the fullness of his powers couldn't have exemplified more fully the finer masculine traits.

Alice often wondered at herself and at Tom, wondered why they never told Sara to "be a man." No one tells little girls to "hurry up and be

like Mother." She used to wonder if this were because of the greater modesty or the greater ambition of mothers, or if, poor things, they saw more vividly what children, and marriage, and living, and time, had done to them, and, seeing these things, it would be an irony to wish for one's little daughter that she should "grow up like mother."

Old-fashioned people used to tell little girls to behave like little ladies. This ideal of conduct didn't appeal to Alice any more than to most mothers of to-day, that is, it didn't intellectually appeal to her. Though there is hardly a mother living, if the truth were known, who wouldn't be glad if there were off days when her children would behave like little ladies and gentlemen—a horrible sight, if it happened every day, but comforting to the nerves of elders if it only happened once in a while.

It is perhaps because we don't urge them to be so grown-up that the grown-up qualities in little girls are less hard to deal with. They take care of you when you're sick sometimes, with unconscious maternal gestures that almost break your heart. They show passionate interest in dress when they are so tiny that you wouldn't think they knew a shoe from a glove. But all this isn't hard to cope with.

With boys it's different. From being grubby, tousle-headed small boys they suddenly grow up before your eyes and remain grown-up half an hour at a time. They show this growing up by having all the symptoms of that trait called "manly dignity." Now manly dignity can be anything from a proper self-respect to a jealous sort of vanity that makes the possessor walk along with a perpetual chip placed ostentatiously on his shoulder. Then, after they have made this ten or fifteen years' jump into the future back they go again,

and perhaps end up their surprising flight with a two-year-old fit of temper accompanied by foot stampings.

They are especially apt to do this if their parents don't realize what was the matter with them in the first place. Then, of course, they are called "naughty boys" and the very least that happens to them is that they are sent out of the room—often sent out, I think, because if a parent doesn't get into a fit of temper over a child's broken heart, life would be too difficult. That sort of anger is the only protection some mothers have between them and the despair that comes from knowing that they haven't acted as they should—and when it comes to children one never does act as one should.

CHAPTER XXII

MANLY DIGNITY arrived at the Marcey's the day that Sara dressed up. *The day that Sara dressed up is incorrect, for this game had no end for her.* It amused her more than any of the useful or constructive-character-building-toys which she had; it amused her more than dolls and house-keeping; it amused her more than her garden. Sara was more amused by her own looks than by any other thing in the world. Sara dressed up was so usual a sight that Alice hardly looked up from her book when she saw her daughter arrayed in a bright green silk basque, low neck, out of whose voluminous top Sara's blue-rompered shoulders and sleeves emerged appealingly.

For a skirt she trailed a much torn silken table scarf, and underneath this she wore a bustle.

It was a bustle of the most flourishing period, corrugated, pompous and indestructible except by fire. Over Sara's head was thrown what had once been an overskirt of some white silk tissue. The fact that she wore the bustle in front and had painted a bright red spot on either cheek and further adorned her face with a painted mustache and imperial accentuated the striking qualities of her costume. She held a broken Japanese sunshade above her head at a rakish angle and walked along, proud, conscious, dignified. She had never achieved a better carriage.

Behind her walked Jamie, wearing a yellow bolero jacket. His face was lavishly painted and, so that one might distinguish between the two, Sara had painted

upon him a blue mustache, in which he quite fancied himself.

Sara marched up to Alice and stood there, radiant, waiting for approval. It is one of the unwritten covenants that no child, expecting approval, should be re-proved.

"I want another one of these," said Sara, patting her bustle. "I want it to wear behind. Then it'll be all the way round. All the way round,"—she gave an ample gesture—"like the pictures you see like the picture of Gran'ma."

"Why don't you wear this one behind?" suggested Alice feebly.

"Because," Sara replied with the perfect logic of childhood, "I couldn't then wear it in front. If I didn't wear it in front, I couldn't see it. But I want it all the way round, like Gran'ma's picture." Again the sweeping gesture of hoop skirts. "Did you wear it all round when you were a little girl?"

"No," said Alice, "that was before my time."

"Did you wear this?" Sara again patted her bustle. No, even that, it seemed, Alice had not worn. She felt that she was losing momentarily in Sara's esteem, so she added, "But your aunt Caroline used to wear them. She wore them behind."

"Then," said Sara, with firmness, "I shall always wear 'em in front. Why didn't you wear it?" she further investigated.

"I wasn't big enough," said Alice, "when they had them."

"I'm big enough," Sara stated superbly, and started off, her parasol held at a regal angle.

She came back again, laid her hand upon her mother's knee and looked up at her with appealing eyes. There was an intensity in her gaze and a quality in her voice

that was touching even with the mustache. It was the clown, sorrowing beneath his white face and red painted smile.

"I want"—she began in a quivering tone. Her voice broke. "I want earrings—and a necklace!" This intense quality in her daughter irritated Alice.

"I want to read," she replied rudely.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE modest wish of Alice's was not to be fulfilled. The portly figure of Tom's mother came around the corner of the house, stately as a ship in full sail. She adjusted her eye-glasses and surveyed her grandchild.

"Whatever," she cried, "has that child got on? Why, it can't be, and yet it is, your Great Aunt Pamela's basque! I should think, my dear, that you'd prefer to keep family relics like that."

"That relic," replied Alice with firmness, "will never wear out! When we were little, Ethel and I played with it, and Mother said it had been used for charades by her." Sara's grandmother stared at her grandchild. The conclusion that she came to was:

"I don't believe in letting children make frights of themselves. What sense is there in allowing a child to deform itself, Alice, at an impressionable age like this? It must be bad for their tender little souls. What on earth *has* that child got on?"

"A bustle," murmured Alice faintly.

"A child shouldn't gaze on a monstrosity like a bustle, without having the full significance of such a preposterous piece of apparel explained to her." And, as Sara approached Mrs. Marcey espied the adornments of her grandchild's face.

"What has she on her face?" she inquired coldly.

"A little water-color paint," Alice admitted.

"I have no patience with you, Alice," remarked Mrs. Marcey. "Come and **speak** to Grandma, darling. Come

and show Grandma what you're wearing. Grandma would love to kiss that sweet, dear little mouth if it wasn't all painted up, and that little cheek too if it wasn't all painted up with nasty paint. Don't you want to run and wash your face like a good little girl?"

"No," replied Sara.

"Suppose," said her Grandmother, "that it should stick all the time and that you could never wash it off."

"But it doesn't," said Sara, "it comes off as easy, as easy. You let me paint you a mustache and then you wash your face, and you'll see how it comes off."

"I wouldn't paint my face like that," said Mrs. Marcey. "I wouldn't like to look horrid. Do wash your face to please Grandma."

Sara put her head on one side and looked at her Grandmother with coquettish eyes and shook her head. Her Grandmother felt for her pocketbook.

"I'll give you five——"

Here Alice put out a protesting hand. "Please, Mother," she begged, "Tom and I don't believe in bribing children with money to do things."

"Hoighty-toighty!" replied the older lady. Here Sara leaned against her Grandmother's knee with affection.

"Say it again," she begged, "Say it again, please."

"Say what again, child? Mercy, Alice, she's a fright!"

"Just what you said to Mama," pleaded Sara, ignoring her Grandmother's remark.

"She means 'Hoighty-toighty,'" said Alice.

"That's a funny word," cried Sara., "Hoighty-toighty! Hoighty-toighty!" She hopped up and down, clapping her hands. "When Robert is a bad boy and when he makes me stick out my tongue at him I sha'n't

stick out my tongue, I'll say that. How was it, Grandma? I can't 'member it." Sara by herself never committed a wrong act. Wrong acts were always drawn from her reluctantly through the wrongdoing and unkindness of others.

"I've often," pursued the grandmother, "seen Robert with five- and even ten-cent pieces which he had gotten for being good."

"Which he had gotten by doing work," Alice insisted mildly but firmly.

"Whether it's face-washing or doing any other task, it's being paid for something one doesn't care to do. Whoever heard of a boy being paid for doing work that he liked? Won't you wash your face, Sara darling?"

"I'm going to stay like this so that Robert can see me when he comes back from school; then I'm going to stay this way so my papa can see me when he comes back, and I'm going to go to bed like this, and Laurie she won't know me. She'll wake up in the morning—" One could see that if Sara were permitted to go on, weeks and months would elapse before she would wash her face. Hurriedly Grandma changed the subject to bustles.

"I shouldn't think you'd want to wear this, Sara. It isn't pretty."

"Aunt Caroline used to wear 'em. She wore 'em behind, Aunt Caroline did."

"A great many queer things have been worn," responded Mrs. Marcey, "these and hoop skirts. People have deformed themselves in many ways. Savages also put rings in their noses."

This was the first part of her grandmother's message of good taste that Sara had heard.

"It isn't good to put things in your nose," she assented with an air of dramatic gloom. "Nellie Ken-

nedy put a bean in her nose. Oh, it hurt! Oh, she cried! I never put things in my nose; but Robert, he's a bad boy, he puts things in his mouth. He swallowed a penny one day."

"That child," said Tom's mother, "can't concentrate. You ought to give her some lessons in concentration, Alice."

When Mrs. Marcey went it wasn't the end of her for the day. Her visit had a deep influence on her grandchild and a sinister one. When it came time for Alice to say:

"Sara, dear, go wash your face before supper,"

"I want to keep it on," Sara asserted. "I want to keep it on to show my papa. I'm going to keep it on to go to bed; I'm going to keep it on all night." There was argument. It ended by Alice remarking, and not at all in the tone that one expects of a modern mother:

"You're going to do no such foolish thing. You're going to wash your face right now."

It's so easy for a mother to make such statements and so hard to make good at them. It's always so humiliating for a right-minded parent to use force on a child—though not as humiliating as it ought to be. What are you going to do when your little child sits down, braces her legs against the door, and says she's going to keep on her mustache and imperial all night, to say nothing of a bright red spot on each cheek, and then adds menacingly as Sara did, "*and all to-morrow too!*" You do what Alice did—pick her up under your arm, making a pretense to yourself and to her that you're cheerful and debonair about it and you resentfully wash off the two red spots and the mustache and imperial, adding as Alice did:

"If there's ever any more trouble like this, you can't use your paint box any more."

CHAPTER XXIV

TOM'S Mother was the immediate cause of what happened, and Sara was the next cause, and Alice's being human was the next cause, and Robert's being a boy was the final cause.

Alice had had just about enough of dirty faces for that day. It was undoubtedly that and the association of ideas which made her greet Robert in that unpleasant way that mothers have with:

"Why, Robert, *what* have you been doing? Go and wash right away; it's almost supper time."

This was not a happy greeting, as any one will realize who can think back to his childhood. Very few people can think back definitely, but those who can remember cautious homecomings by back ways, careful avoidance of mothers and fathers, knowing that the first word that they would speak would be one of disapproval. What with torn clothes and dirty hands, and coming in late, the return of the child can be a trying ordeal.

Robert disappeared into the bathroom and presently emerged again.

"Did you wash your face," Alice inquired coldly, "while you were in there?" He flushed under tan and dirt. Boys eight years old resent sarcasm as they do nothing else.

"Isn't it clean?" he asked innocently.

"Clean?" echoed Alice. "*Clean!*" Again he went in. One standing near the door could hear the sound of careful washing, that is, careful in the sense of not covering too great an area of his perishable and possibly

soluble face with water. Avoidance and not the eradication of dirt was Robert's method. Once more he came out.

"You're dirtier than ever," cried Alice unjustly. "I shall go with you." He said nothing. "Don't hump your shoulders at me in that impertinent way," Alice advised. At this he turned on her with,

"I wasn't humping!"

"Supper's ready! Supper's ready! Supper's ready!" Sara chanted monotonously.

"Come, come," said Alice in a cheerful grown-up tone, "wash your face, Robert." He looked at her.

"What am I doing?" he asked gloomily, and continued washing, one single finger under his barely dampened face cloth. He turned three drops of water on the wash rag. With this moistened rag he barely touched the soap. Both water and soap might have been something poisonous. He then, with one finger beneath the cloth, lightly passed it around his cheeks. As though with deep reluctance he again let three drops of water fall upon the rag. A small black spot appeared there where it had been in contact with his cheek. Again he rubbed it as though either he was perishable or water poisonous. He circled around his eyes, leaving a round dark area, with great care as though washing egg shells. He washed his forehead leaving a black ring near the hair. He ignored altogether the unchartered tracks behind the ears. It was a maddening process for a mother to watch.

CHAPTER XXV

ENOUGH of this!" cried Alice. "Give that face cloth to me. If you are not old enough to wash your face I shall wash it for you!"

His face was set. He tried to wriggle out of her grasp. She held him firmly; firmly she washed his face—one might almost have said violently. Certainly she did a thorough piece of work. When she got through he was crying bitterly. He wrenched himself away from her and ran up-stairs to the sheltering darkness. Alice could hear him sobbing, and she was so blind,—so angry at Robert, that she didn't know why he was crying.

The real matter was his manly dignity had been wounded. Robert had not been allowed to wash his own face. He had been washed like a baby. His dignity was outraged and, worse and worse, he couldn't keep from crying. Manly dignity is a terrible burden at Robert's age.

Alice knew she shouldn't have done it. She knew she had wounded him in some vulnerable spot, for he rarely cried. She couldn't dismiss it lightly when Robert's father asked her what the matter was with Robert by saying,

"Oh, he's just been a naughty little boy!" That's the advantage that children have over you. Alice felt naughty and Robert didn't. The Distressing Doubt was back again. She tried in vain to placate her conscience and her self-reproaches with the specious consolation:

"Well, he should have washed his face quicker." And conscience only demanded of her "Why?" So

this was the reason that she was so lenient to the loud dispute that was heard the next morning. What it was all about one couldn't gather; one only knew that it was between Laurie and Robert. When Alice appeared upon the scene of action they spoke at once. Laurie said:

"He won't put his necktie on, ma'am."

"She chokes me," grumbled Robert.

"I don't, then," replied Laurie.

"I can do it myself," said Robert.

"You cannot, then," promptly contradicted Laurie.

"And he threw himself down on the floor, ma'am, like Jamie for all the world, in a tantrum."

Next day he appeared at breakfast with a necktie whose knot was about at the middle of his stomach.

"What ails your tie, son?" Tom asked.

"He tied it himself," said Sara.

"Go and fix your tie," suggested Tom. Robert returned without any.

"Is that what you call fixing your tie?" Tom asked him.

"Yes," replied Robert, brazenly.

"What's the matter with you?" Tom inquired. There was an edge of curiosity in his tone as he looked at Robert. He saw vaguely that it wasn't just naughtiness. Then Robert broke through the inarticulateness of childhood.

"I won't be tweaked and pinched and pulled!" said irritable manly pride, speaking for itself. With a "this won't do" look, Robert was told to fetch his necktie. His father tied it tight; he tied it with emphasis. Tom left the house a little after his son and in a moment Tom returned. In his hand was a noose of blue silk; it was the necktie. He had found it on the door-step.

"Can you beat it?" was his comment.

CHAPTER XXVI

WHAT are you going to do with a boy who won't wear a necktie? Not with a boy that just makes a fuss and then weakly gives in but a boy who just simply *won't* wear a necktie? You can ignore what is happening, or you can make a case of that sort of parent lèse majesté known as disobedience; but still it's inglorious to make all that fuss about a necktie.

You have another alternative and a weak one—you can say it's a phase and that it will wear off. Then your child meets your friends, meets his relatives, meets his grandmother. One and all they clamor when they see you next:

"What a manly looking little fellow Robert's getting to be. But so absent-minded! I saw him to-day on the street without a necktie!" That's what happened with Robert. When they asked him what was the matter he simply explained:

"I don't like neckties." When they tied them on for him, sooner or later they found it thrown on the ground, over the back of a chair, anywhere, except around Robert's neck.

It grew to be a nuisance; it grew to be a mystery. It challenged them at every meal. It made question marks at them every time they encountered Robert. It asked them all the time if they were really conscientious parents would they let such a state of things go on? It asked them when they had, almost made up their minds not to let such a state of things go on if they had

no sense of humor. Robert maintained a complete and obstinate silence.

The scene with Laurie which occurred one Saturday morning ended with her saying she would leave, and Robert announcing that he would burn all his neckties. Directly after breakfast Alice saw him making his way to the garden. He was necktieless, and in his hand were some bright colored objects—neckties, all of them. He disappeared in the shrubbery. Then Alice saw a little spiral of smoke arising. As in all well-regulated households, matches were forbidden to children in the Marcey family. By the time Alice got there there was no Robert, nothing but a little heap of scorching and smoldering neckties. She stared at them, and then she sat down beside them and thought:

Children are generally so good that an open act of rebellion or a maliciously destructive act leaves us gasping. We don't know how to meet it; we are so used to only minor protests from them that anything else takes our breath away. This was not naughtiness; Alice realized some moral issue was at stake in Robert's mind. She realized that here she was face to face with a supreme protest. She realized, moreover, that he had trumped all their tricks; in other words, he had forced them into making a row that no necktie was worth—or else into letting him alone.

Swiftly Alice made up her mind. She buried the neckties. When she went up-stairs to her own room Robert had returned by some circuitous route. Through an open crack in the door she saw him standing before the looking glass in the spare room. In his hands he had a straight piece of rag. Over and over he was trying to tie a necktie with it. Then suddenly, with a flash of insight, that is so common in fiction and so rare in life, she understood what was the matter.

Robert was no baby to be tweaked around by nurses and half choked while his necktie was put on him. Until he himself could adjust a necktie he would wear none that had been tied by any one else's hand. He wasn't old enough to say this, but he was old enough to feel it. He was old enough to defy his family in his fight for personal dignity.

One afternoon Alice saw him leaving the house. About his neck was a brilliant strip of color. It hung below his shirtwaist midway between his thigh and knee. Alice recognized the flamboyant necktie as one of her husband's which he had found too brilliant to wear. Not only was Robert adorned in this magnificent cravat, neatly tied—but his hair was brushed; he looked washed. He looked all the things that were so rarely accomplished without a suggestion from some older person. As he started off, Alice felt that she had not for weeks seen him look like such a little boy—they never look younger than when they are aping their fathers' ways. It was Laurie who snatched her from this comforting reflection.

"He's going to see his girl!" were the words she spoke

"His *girl!*" Alice echoed stupidly. Not eight years old and going to see his girl, with his father's necktie dangling almost to his knees!

"Who is his girl?" Alice inquired next. "Does he tell you?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, ma'am," said Laurie, "he's quite confidential about them. He's got two. One is Phyllis Bennett and the other is Marion Riley."

"He's not going to see that one now," piped up Sara. "He's going to see a new one! He's going to Gwen-dolyn!"

"An' I've a beau, too," said Sara. Alice had not

known a moment ago that Sara knew that there were beaux in the world.

"My beau is Laurie," Sara went on, hugging her nurse around the knees.

"An' mine, too," echoed Jamie from the floor.

"An' when we grow up we're both going to marry Laurie, aren't we, Jamie?" pursued Sara.

Then with gratitude in her heart that she still had two real babies, and that manly dignity had not yet come to trouble Jamie, Alice kissed her two younger children.

CHAPTER XXVII

THOUGH Sara hadn't yet arrived at having disconcerting grown-up moments, she was as hard to understand as Robert and there were often times when it was as impossible to catch her thoughts as it would be to capture erratic butterflies. They would flutter around Alice, but always just out of reach. What Sara meant by the things she was saying would remain interesting but tantalizingly obscure. That Robert had always been an articulate child made it all the harder to understand Sara. Jamie at three was more comprehensible. Jamie's communications were mostly in the imperative. "Give me!" "Let go!" alternated with a fair amount of regularity with "I want," and also with softer demands such as, "Kiss Jamie."

But in Sara's life realities were not. Things she wanted to be so, were. Time had no existence, and all unpleasant commands, and unpalatable ideas were hastily shoved away in a mental glory-hole whose door opened inward easily, but had to be pulled outward by force. Those fatal words: "Don't you remember what Mother said?" would fire no answering spark in Sara's mind. What "Mother had said" had gone to the glory-hole and there, for all Sara cared, it could stay. But of course if Alice wanted to resurrect her own prying and unpleasant words, why, let her; she could do it without Sara's help.

If you wanted to find out why Sara wanted to do certain things or why she had done them, then, indeed, you had a chase before you, and just as you thought you had

pinned her down and at last had the thought which had actuated her conduct living in your hand, whish! it had gone away, and you had no clue!

As Alice was an unusually reasonable mother she always tried to catch Sara's thoughts, believing as she did that they had some relation to Sara's acts.

"If you could only find out what Sara was thinking about, you could find out why she acted as she did," was the way Alice reasoned.

There were so many things that Sara did that were impenetrable to the adult mind. Take the bedtime things, for instance, Sara always had made a fuss about bedtime things. She had always insisted upon putting her dolls to bed. When there were only three or four dolls this was all very well, but Sara had begun putting Teddy Bears to bed also.

So far, so good. Then came the day of Kewpies. Everybody who came to see Sara brought her a Kewpie. They brought rubber ones, they brought little ones, they brought large, expensive ones, and all these Sara immediately dressed by cutting a hole in any piece of cloth she could find for the head to poke through, and sewing up the two sides.

When her mother pointed out they were meant to be without clothes, Sara's attitude toward Alice was that of an Anglo-Saxon woman toward a South Italian. It was all very well for an ignorant, South Italian child to go around with one short and inadequate shirt over its little stomach, but as for her children——

Clothes for Kewpies were bad enough, but when it came to providing them all with bed and bedding, Alice felt it was too much. Again, however, Sara proved too much for her mother. Her disapproving attitude seemed to say, "Do you think that Kewpies, because they have wings, roost upon trees?"

In fact Sara's attitude toward them was that of a missionary having rescued them from a savage life. One gathered that she highly disapproved of all their doings when out of captivity. No scuffling around naked for Sara's Kewpies—no roosting on trees! No living in nests any more! No high-minded missionary ever descended upon an innocent South Sea tribe and put them all into shifts and trousers with greater gusto than did Sara.

She would despoil her own dolls, those with cotton or kid bodies, for the sake of making clothes for her Kewpies. Her dolls would sprawl round indecorously—nakedness as such was not repellent to Sara's moral sense. When her mother tried to find out why Kewpies needed clothes—"They'll catch cold," said Sara, indicating Kewpies, "these won't."

"But why?" asked Alice. "Why will they catch cold?"

"Because," was Sara's reply, and the intonation in which she answered made her mother feel a fool for having asked her the question.

"They don't catch cold," Alice pursued.

"They do," said Sara, "they do!" Temper shone dangerously near. Alice saw that it was the part of a wise parent to drop the subject; but that night the nursery resembled a hospital ward in an Arctic clime. It was not with ordinary maternal feeling that Sara put her Kewpies to bed. She performed this service with an impatient intensity, glowering over her shoulder and casting suspicious glances upon her mother and nurse as one who would say, "Touch one of these blankets if you dare!" There was that about her that suggested she would suffer martyrdom and was even ready to brave the terrors of a spanking should any one

interfere with her impassioned putting-to-bed of her Kewpies.

She was dressed in a woolly bath robe, her hair braided in two stiff little braids that stuck out aggressively at an angle. She covered and tucked up her dolls with still intensity, making sure they were tucked in head and foot, and that no amount of kicking on their part would disturb their well-adjusted bedclothes. Now and then she looked over her shoulder at her mother with the air of a dog with a bone.

There is nothing more concentrated, nothing more potentially fierce which occurs before our eyes than the common spectacle of a dog with a bone. Only that we are used to it, and because dogs are smaller than we, and our hearts fail to shake before the spectacle of the tearing and rending, the wild and defiant glances, with savagery only two steps off and the jungle just around the corner.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A STRANGE situation existed in the nursery. Alice sitting like Patience on the Monument, the savage and suspicious Sara putting doll after doll to bed, and Laurie making protest by opening and shutting bureau drawers and putting away clothes with nerve-racking and unnecessary emphasis.

"I am of no use in this nursery," Alice thought. This emphatic putting-to-bed might be hastened by her going, but she was not long out of the room before sounds of conflict filled the air. Protests and screams from Sara mingled with Laurie's shrill expostulations. Alice hastened to the scene of strife.

"When it comes to putting furniture to bed!" Laurie cried to Alice, "when it comes to undoing my own pocket handkerchiefs to make sheets for dolls' furniture, and the putting-to-bed of automobiles that wind up, and putting-to-bed even toy tea sets and cups and saucers, and maybe it'll be blocks next thing, something has got to stop, Mis' Marcey!"

"I'm not going to put blocks to bed! Just automobiles and furniture!" An added fury shown in Sara's eye. She was possessed! Reasonable and sane, or not, she must have bedding for dolls' furniture and for automobiles.

"You're not going to give in to her, are you, Mis' Marcey?" Laurie demanded, witheringly.

There are a few young mothers who do not quail before the cool common sense of their maids.

"They're cold!" screeched Sara, "they want be anything!"

"There'll be no end to this," warned Laurie.

"They've got to be covered up! They'll catch cold and die!" screamed Sara. There had rushed over Sara one of her impassioned and irresistible desires. These desires would come swiftly and engulf Sara, leaving her deaf to the pleadings of common sense, deaf to reason. Some of the things she wanted you could understand; others one failed to fathom. The only thing concerning which one could be sure was the reality of these desires in Sara's heart.

"Of course I could sit down and wait till midnight if need be," came the voice of the sensible Laurie.

Sara was rapidly covering up pieces of furniture.

"You give Sara the rein, Mis' Marcey, and she won't take an ell, she'll take a square mile and a half, she will!"

"They've got to be put to bed," screamed Sara in her tense, possessed voice.

"You're through now, Sara," said Alice.

"There's just one more thing," Sara insisted, "one more thing; it's got to be put to bed! It's got to be made warm! It's got to go to sleep!"

From beneath the bed she fished out a mechanical toy.

"This'll happen night after night," warned Laurie. "There'll come times when Sara won't get to bed at all, not before morning!"

Sara had rifled the waste-paper basket of a newspaper and made a large, warm-looking bundle. Now she sighed with relief.

"They're all done up for the night," she said. She surveyed her work proudly.

Ranged almost the whole length of the nursery floor was a foundling asylum of Kewpies and a long string

f miscellaneous-shaped bundles. Sara, her task performed, was now ready for bed. She kissed her mother, she kissed Laurie, she blew kisses to her handiwork, and even stretched herself as one who has accomplished great things. There was that about her which made one feel that not one second sooner could she have been reft from her pillow without great violence. But Sara was too magnanimous to show any triumph over Laurie. Once ready, she went to bed like an angel.

CHAPTER XXIX

WHAT ails Sara?" Tom Marcey wanted to know. Alice told him. "She's cranky again," said he lightly; but Alice had got to the point where she could not lightly dismiss the doings of her children with explanations like this. The impassioned desires of Sara came from somewhere. They had their reasons, and once a mother has come to the point where she knows everything in the world of childhood has a possibly important reason, she is lost. Forever after she will spend her time following blind and elusive trails in her children's minds. Forevermore she will try and find out the why of things. There is no search more fascinating in all this world, and scarcely one more difficult. How can one find out why? They do not know themselves.

From the depths of Sara's nature there arose this necessity of putting to bed everything that she could lay her hands on. Laurie and Tom thought it mere perversity, a desire to make trouble for grown-up people, and shoved it from their minds with the amiable explanation that Sara was in her crankiness trying to provoke them. But these impassioned desires of childhood, Alice knew, came from other sources. Like any real need of the human mind opposition caused it to burn with a fiercer flame. Any real passion, like love, like religion, craves martyrdom, so Sara would not have been averse to having her passion for putting the furniture to bed quickened by suffering.

Perhaps, Alice thought, it was a welling up of the

maternal instinct; but wherever it came from, there was one thing of which one could be as sure as one could be sure of all Sara's impassioned desires, and that was its reality.

Taking it all together, Alice decided that many of Sara's most inexplicable wishes flowed from the maternal instinct, and she wondered why civilization has tried to chain and check and train the instinct to love, and why through the ages it has dug deep channels, the channel of marriage for instance, into which it has attempted to divert its turbulent waters, while its sister instinct, equally ferocious, with equal powers of destruction, the maternal instinct, has been allowed to roam unchecked. It has no conventions. We do all we can to prevent the instinct to love from appearing prematurely among our children and young people; but let the maternal instinct rear its head, however young and in whatever extraordinary forms, and we pamper it.

Only thus and so, civilization has agreed, shall love receive our sanction. For the good of the race we will try and see that it walks within such and such appointed limits—at least as much as we can; but to the maternal instinct everything is allowed, unseasonable appearances and unlovely manifestations. All sorts of vagaries of young and old we explain by saying "She felt the maternal instinct." Why chains and conventions and inhibitions and taboos for one, and a whole world of license for the other? Why this complacent fostering of the maternal instinct in very little girls until we have emotional scenes over dolls, was the question that Alice now increasingly put to the universe.

A cataclysm that happened not long after the Kewpies made Alice wish that civilization had as little considered cultivating the maternal instinct in the young as it has the instinct to love. In other words Alice wished

that dolls had never been invented. All too soon had Sara emerged from the little girl state where one doll succeeds another only to be broken, and, unlamented, removed from the nursery. All too soon had the cheap and breakable species of toy given way to a lifelike creature who was, this side of a hammer or hatchet, indestructible. Her clothes were made by hand, replicas of Sara's own. She had a nightgown and a bath robe, and upon her Sara lavished the care of an anguished mother of one child who has nothing whatever to worry about but this one child's health and adornment.

Instead of long real hair which came out shockingly, disclosing a hollow skull, or in the case of another type of head, came off, Georgiana—for this was her name—had short curly hair which apparently could no more be removed than Sara's own red thatch. With the advent of Georgiana, Sara gave up putting Kewpies to bed. No more were automobiles tucked in and kissed good night. She rocked her child asleep, she sat and jounced it on her knee, she did, in fact, all the things that mothers in this generation are supposed not to do.

"Hush! Don't wake my child!" she would cry, and she had been brought up in a household where all the noises of life went on unchecked, baby or no baby. From out of the great storehouse of the past had come to Sara instinctively all the harmful lore of long ages of unscientific mothers. Relentlessly she practiced this lore upon her suffering family, knee-trottings, rockings to sleep and all.

Alice watched her. As far as she knew, her daughter had never seen such goings on with little babies. Where did she come by such tricks? Mystery impenetrable, and in the same category with the games beloved of childhood such as "house" and "school," where the mother is invariably a scold and the teacher a shrew,

let their own teachers and mothers be as gentle as possible. The humorous convention of childhood insists on this travesty of its parents and instructors.

Georgiana, however, was endurable. The trouble really began with Lilietta, who had brown eyes instead of blue, and who had the further disadvantage of coming dressed in one brief garment, so that Georgiana had to share her clothes with her new sister. She did not mind it, being a broad-minded doll, but it rent Sara's heart. It rent her heart in both ways. She hated to take clothes away from Georgiana in the first place, and she hated Lilietta to wear given clothes in the second. Again her mother beheld in Sara things she had never learned at home. It had not been Sara's lot ever to give her clothes to other children or to receive clothes. Whence came this prejudice with its accompanying anguish?

Sara wanted clothes for Lilietta with an intensity that had a wolfish quality. So fierce a light shone in her eyes that Alice bestirred herself with needle and thread, remembering a sampler with three holes cut in it—one for the head, two for the arms—that hung in a stairway in her mother's house. This sampler, according to tradition, had been cut up to clothe a doll which belonged to Alice's grandmother, and it must have been with a similar fierce light in her eye that this ancestor of Sara's had pierced these holes in the piece of cloth. Anything might be snipped up by Sara, Alice realized, unless Lilietta were clothed.

CHAPTER XXX

IF was at this period that Sara, Alice and Tom's mother went shopping in a nearby city. Alice had always marveled at those mothers who took their children shopping for fun. It is bad enough to go to town and shop at the best, and it is hard enough shopping with a child like slippery Sara, even in country towns; but to think of what you want and to keep your eye on a slippery Sara at the same time was one of those heroic tasks that Alice considered fit only for a race of super-women yet unborn.

So when her mother-in-law said she would also join the party Alice felt her cup was more than full. Encumbered with a ponderous elderly relative who shopped with a relentless ferocity and whose mobility was that of the mastodon, one could accomplish but little.

When on the train her grandmother leaned back, opened a hand bag of a size which one might have packed for a week-end, and from that drew out another smaller bag, and from this drew out a magnificent change purse and from this again extracted a two-dollar bill which she presented to Sara, saying:

"Now, Sara dear, this is for you. You may buy whatever you like with it."

When this happened Alice felt that a martyr's crown had been placed upon her head.

"How much do you suppose that is, Sara?" said her grandmother.

"Far too much to give to Sara," interposed Alice.

"It's awfully kind of you, mother dear, but it's too large a sum for Sara to spend."

"Tut, tut!" replied grandmother. "Children are never too young to learn to buy one good thing in place of a thousand small ones. I want this to be an early lesson to Sara, by which she will learn how one good thing lasts, while money frittered away gives pleasure to no one. How much is this, Sara?"

"More'n half a dollar. Robert told me," Sara replied confidently.

"Four half dollars," her grandmother corrected. "And how much is four half dollars? Each half dollar is fifty cents, and fifty cents is fifty pennies, and if you were to give these two dollars and ask for pennies, they would give you two hundred pennies."

"How many is two hundred pennies?" asked Sara, "as many as this?" She cupped her hands together.

Numbers meant nothing to her. It was always a marvel to her when her mother took her in a shop and with a little silly ten-cent piece purchased not only candy but received bright gilt pennies in exchange as well, and now apparently one could take this uninteresting-looking piece of paper and get pennies for it, handfuls of them. The world was bright.

"That's what I'm going to buy with that," she announced. "Two hundred pennies, bright ones. I'll put them in my bank-bing! I'll put them in Jamie's bank-bing! And then I can buy things and things and THINGS at the five- and ten-cent store. There's a great, big, long five- and ten-cent store where we're going, bigger than ours! I saw it Christmas! Mother took me. If Robert's good I'll give him eleven pennies, eleventeen, maybe," she prattled on.

CHAPTER XXXI

OH, no, Sara," said her grandmother, "that's not what you must do. You must buy one good thing with this."

"Then," said Sara, putting the real question, "can I do what I want with what belongs to me?"

"Yes, indeed, darling, anything you like."

"Then," resumed Sara, "I'm going to get two hundred pennies, bright ones, and I'm going——"

"Hush, Sara," said her mother, "talk no more about what you are going to do till we get to the store, and then grandma will tell you what you can get." She added in a hasty aside, "I know that's not what you mean, but it'll do for the time being until she gets over this two hundred pennies idea."

There was so much to be done. Alice walked as rapidly as circumstances permitted, steering her child, towing her mother-in-law until Sara came to a full stop.

"Clothes!" she cried, pointing to a counter, "clothes for dolls. Clothes for my children." Her voice grew shriller. "Clothes is what I want! Clothes for my Georgiana, clothes for my Lilietta. Winter coats is what they need."

No mother of experience could have been more definite. Sara was expressing the wish of her heart. In her emphasis she conveyed to Alice how absolutely two little coats filled her heart with joy to overflowing.

"How much are they?" inquired grandma.

They proved to be a dollar each.

"A dollar each!" cried the outraged grandmother.

"A dollar each! To pay that for dolls' coats when you can get a whole splendid doll all ready dressed for a dollar!"

"Ready-made dolls' clothes are a luxury," said Alice.

"I should say they are! They're awfully cunning though."

"A coat apiece!" cried Sara.

"I said you could get just one thing," responded Sara's grandmother with heavenly patience; "*one* beautiful thing!"

"Coats!" cried Sara, "coats for my children! Winter coats!"

"We'll come back to them later," said Alice with finality. "Sara has to get shoes now. It was specially to have her fitted with proper shoes that I brought her in."

"Coats!" mourned Sara; but led skillfully by Alice—shamelessly some would have thought—Sara let her mind now dwell on the joys of personal adornment, on white shoes and brown shoes and black shoes, and prattled like a brook about stockings that matched.

"The books are right over here," said Mrs. Marcey, senior, in a stage whisper. "Let's show her picture books. Sara darling, don't you like to look at picture books?"

Of course Sara loved to look at picture books.

"Wouldn't you like to buy a picture book, darling Sara?" said her grandmother ingratiatingly. "Look here. Alice, see this beautiful Hans Christian Andersen, and you said the other day that your children hadn't such a thing in the house. Now a little girl who really wanted to spend her money on this book would seem to me the cleverest little girl I'd ever seen. Everybody who ever heard of a little girl buying this lovely book would think that little girl was one who has good

sense enough to buy something that will last for years and years. Her grandma will read her stories."

Sara's head was craned eagerly forward.

"And would her father read to her too?"

"Oh, yes, her father would surely."

"And would her mother read to her?"

"Yes, indeed. Wouldn't you, Alice?"

"Then everybody would read to me?"

"Lovely fairy tales," supplemented her crafty grandmother.

"Can I buy it?" Sara asked.

"Of course you can." Her grandmother winked several times, winks that meant, "See what a wonder I am for managing children when I set my mind to it!"

"Now, Sara, take the two dollars and give it to the lady there. Now you have bought your lovely book. Shall I have it sent?"

"I want it now!" cried Sara.

"Let her have it now," said Alice wearily.

"Yes, bless her little heart, she shall have it! Can you carry that heavy book all the way, Sara?"

"Of course I can," Sara assented proudly.

"We'll have everything else sent," said Alice; "we can manage it between us."

"And now," said Sara, with her book clasped to her bosom, "*now* we'll go get the winter coats, one for Lilietta and one for Georgiana!" She smiled confidently at her two elders. Alice's heart smote her. She had known all the time what was coming, yet how stop the current of events?

CHAPTER XXXII

WHY," cried her grandmother, "you've spent your money, Sara! You've got the book."

"But I want dolls' coats," cried Sara. "I got to have 'em."

"You've got a lovely, lovely book instead. That will last you when the dolls are broken and the dolls' coats worn out."

"They'll never be broken!" cried Sara in the outraged tone of a mother who has been told she will still have her grand piano when her children are dead.

"Oh, I want coats!" she cried. She slipped to the floor, buried her face in her hands and sobbed, not with anger but with grief, the awful grief of grown-ups that occasionally smites children. Her mother and her grandmother stood before her.

"Don't be naughty, Sara," came feebly from her grandmother's lips; but Alice had nothing to say. As well tell a poor mother not to be naughty when she has had in sight warmth and comfort for her children for the winter and then had her money bamboozled from her.

"But why can't I have coats? *Why* can't I have coats? I'll give them back the book," she cried.

Sara flung herself, with the tragic gesture of one whose heart had been broken completely, upon her mother's chest, and there she remained sobbing while her grandmother murmured:

"Really, you must stop this. Come, let us divert her mind. The auditorium is decorated with canary birds; let's take her up there."

Again they practiced upon Sara the sort of spiritual

deception grown-ups practice upon children, known as "taking their minds off it." Sara listened to the voices of fifty canaries singing at once, and for a moment forgot her mother cares. Ice cream at an unseasonable hour helped also. So did Alice's carrying the book where it would be noticed the least.

The rest of the day had only the usual unpleasant incidents attendant upon doing too much shopping in too short a time, and getting a train, and trying clothes on a little girl who wants everything she sees, and listening to words from one's mother-in-law like, "I think you should not be so arbitrary, Alice dear. How do you think Sara will develop her sense of choice if you tell her what she must have every time?" And this when trains leave so inexorably.

During the day Sara's grandmother slipped away mysteriously with knowing nods at Alice, and came back bringing a tiny bundle with her.

When they got home she said:

"See what a fairy has brought for a sensible little Sara who took a book instead of buying other things. The fairy was so pleased to see little Sara so sensible that she flew away on fairy wings and got something for Sara."

"Did she pay for it?" Sara inquired sternly. Sad experiences of her own had sufficiently taught her that things must not be taken from shops without payment.

"Oh, yes, she paid for it. She was an honest fairy. She paid for it and took it with her. And what do you think it is?"

"What?" cried Sara, with shining eyes. Poor Sara! She was an easy victim for bait like this.

"A doll's coat!" cried her grandmother with triumph. "Yes, Alice, I was an awful fool! But there was a little coat for a dollar and a half that was so much

better than those dollar coats, and such really fine material, that I bought it!"

Here there should be a deeply impressive scene, everybody embracing everybody else amid the glad cries of Sara, but instead Sara's lip quivered. Tears slid down her cheeks.

"Thank you," she murmured in a trembling voice.

"Why, Sara, what's the matter?" cried her grandmother. "What ails you? Don't you like the coat?"

Sara could not speak. She slipped down on the floor and put her face in her mother's lap, holding the coat aloft. She made a violent effort, knowing how kind her grandmother had meant to be. From the depths of the desire of her aching mother heart quivered the words, "*What's Georgiana going to do? What's Georgiana going to do? What's Georgiana going to do all winter?*"

Justice decreed that the richer Georgiana should suffer. The coats, and two coats alone, would have fulfilled the impassioned desired of the maternal heart of Sara. She could not explain. She had no words. But since she had one naked and cold offspring she had also a mother's broken heart.

There had to be some way out of the difficulty. Life would otherwise have been too cruel. Alice came into the nursery to hear Sara talking to the Unseen.

"Evelyn," Sara was calling cautiously, "Evelyn Dearie."

"I thought Evelyn Dearie was dead and buried?" Alice protested.

"I've undeaded her. She isn't dead any more. She said, 'Sara, I'd better come back. I'm better'n Georgiana. I don't worry so. I don't wear clothes!'"

What could Alice answer? The day had been too hard, and besides, there are few ways of outwitting the tyranny of the maternal instinct.

CHAPTER XXXIII

FOR a long time school had been throwing a shadow over Alice's life. It had all been decided for months that Robert was to go to public school in the fall. He was two years late going, but a very superior kindergarten "took" children through the first grade. In his second year influenza had raged, and so William Travers Jenkins, and Phyllis Alden, and Robert had had school together. Robert was therefore ready for the fourth grade and swaggered a good deal about it. That is to say, he was more than ready in geography and arithmetic, but his writing was scandalous, and his interest in life had never allowed him time to learn to spell.

Tom took Robert's going to school with complacency. Public school, he had decided, was the best thing after all, since it fitted boys for life. But Alice looked upon the handsome brick school building as she might look upon a pest-house that soon was to engulf her child. She often had to pass it on her way to the grocery. It had large plate windows which from the sidewalk looked as green as the windows in front of an aquarium, and perpetually fluttering and swinging behind them were the raised hands of children. One could only see their hands tossed restlessly upwards through the green glass.

This school building seemed to her full of enemies. She dreaded the school with the same intensity that she feared second summers, weaning, and the whooping cough. Once your children went to school, then, indeed, they set sail for the unknown. Kindergarten wasn't so

bad—anyway not in Shoreham, where it was composed of a couple of dozen children all known to one—and no one could deny that it was a relief to have howling Sara, Robert, and Uncle Zotsby with his dog, all gone for a whole peaceful morning. Then one could get Things Done. Public school is different. Intellectually, Alice assented, it was the best place for a boy, but in her own secret heart her opinion of our school system was that of the educated Chinaman, who when asked why he didn't send his boy to our schools, replied with simplicity,

“Madam! Get louse—learn bad words.” And, there was furthermore, to help in all the undesirable sides of Robert's education, Red Bates, the livery stableman's boy, whom Robert very much fancied. She felt that as soon as he went to school she would not be able to find her way around his mind any more. She would be forever tripping and stumbling over foreign things other people had put there.

CHAPTER XXXIV

ALREADY before school closed its gates upon him, Robert had been growing up, and each day took him away from Sara, who remained hopelessly imbedded in the early innocence of babyhood.

What he thought of Sara he let out one Sunday morning when Sara was first to appear in Sunday school.

"I'm not going to take Sara to Sunday School," he announced, "unless she'll learn who Christ is." He looked at his sister with disapproval. His attitude toward her was that of a sensitive young man of twenty, towards a sister afflicted with the giggles. Silly was what he thought Sara was. "There isn't another child of her age," he went on, "who doesn't know who Christ is. Every child knows—only Sara. She won't learn—she don't care. And why don't she care? It's because she can't stand religion."

"I can too," came from Sara, who was sitting on the floor making a long circus procession from the animals in Jamie's Noah's Ark.

"You don't. You don't even know who Noah was. You play all day with Noah's Ark and you don't even know who Noah is. She's like that," he confided to his mother. "She's just as thick, she's just as dumb."

"Thick! dumb!" thought Alice to herself. Here were the fruits of public school.

"I do know who Noah is," said Sara belligerently.

"Who is he?" said Robert the inquisitor.

"He's the one what the whale et," replied Sara with assurance.

"There, there, you see? That's the way she goes on! I tell her who Christ is—I tell her time and again. Then what does she say? You tell Mother who Christ is."

"Christ's the Sun-God," lisped Sara.

"That's what she always says when she doesn't call him *Crust!* Jesus *Crust* is what she says and you want me to take her to Sunday School! You want I should have five fights on my hands with boys laughing at Sara?"

"Come, come," said Tom, "you nag your sister in the most awful fashion. Sara knows as well as you do that Christ is the Son of God. Why shouldn't she know? She's heard nothing else since she was born."

"Yes, why shouldn't she," echoed Robert gloomily, "and why shouldn't she know who George Washington is; and why shouldn't she know who Christopher Columbus is? Bet you Jamie knows. He knows more than Sara does and he's only three."

"I do know who George Washington is. He's the one who discovered America."

"There! You see? I won't go a place with her before she knows the difference between George Washington, Christopher Columbus, and Jesus Christ. I spend afternoons telling her—yes, and mornings, about which was the father of our country, and which discovered America, but she won't remember."

"And you know why I won't; and you know why I can't 'member, Robert Marcey! It's because those old men are none of 'em interesting."

CHAPTER XXXV

THERE seemed to be no way of bridging the gulf between them. During the winter Robert grew up at an awful rate of speed, while Sara still remained uninterested in George Washington when spring came.

One of the sights in Alice's life which seemed to her to have increased with greater and greater frequency was that of Robert and his friends sailing rapidly over the earth's surface like swift hydroplanes, while Sara, like a poor little inefficient rowboat, frantically followed in their wake; and as they ran from her, Sara roared.

The theory of parents is that their children play together, and get fun and profit from playing together.

What really happened in the Marcey household was something like this: Robert seemed to spend a large part of his leisure, and much ingenuity, in avoiding Sara's presence out of doors. When they were in the house Robert plunged himself in a book, demanding in tones that made his mother think of an unmannerly husband: "Can't I *ever* have any peace? Can't I ever read in quiet?"

Jamie, on the other hand, was a spiritually self-supporting child. He could enjoy companionship or leave it alone. He played strange games by himself for hours, to his own complete satisfaction. For long hours he built by himself, showing, it seemed to his mother, little ingenuity. He used his blocks not for the making of edifices but for the construction of railway tracks, for which they were unsuitable, and along which he would

rush the five-cent engines that his father so frequently brought him.

These engines were made of cast-iron, and to the adult eye they looked indestructible, though in the hands of an experienced toy-breaking child they proved fragile and came apart with disconcerting frequency. As for getting lost, one might talk to Alice about what became of all the hairpins in the world which were lost. That to her was a simple problem. But what became of all the cast-iron toys was what she wanted to know.

To this question there was no answer. They disappeared from the earth's surface: that was all she knew, and next thing Jamie was demanding another engine to shove along his block tracks—yes, and getting it, although she pointed out to Tom that Jamie was now quite of an age to take care of things, and be deprived of things for a time if he could not learn to take care of them better. To which Tom replied that it was probably the older children's fault that Jamie's toys got lost. More than that, Tom had always pined for engines in his own youth and never had as many as he wanted, and any child of his who wanted five-cent engines should have as many as he could use. That is the way that fathers uphold family discipline.

So there was on the one hand, Jamie performing his solemn games—his mother sometimes wondered if one could call them by the name of playing, so concentrated was he—and on the other the elusive and vanishing Robert. Between the two of them the gregarious Sara.

She was perfectly willing to play with her younger brother, but she was willing to play with him only on her own terms. She didn't like railways or railway tracks. She was forever wanting to pretend that engines were something which they were not; she was for-

ever trying to build tracks into something else. Jamie wanted things as they were. This led to discord.

Alice's sense of justice made her feel that Jamie should be allowed to play as he wanted to. But she thought that Robert should let Sara into his out-of-door games. She had a theory that boys and girls play the same games if they are brought up together. For the most part Sara shared this opinion of her mother's; she shared it strongly; she shared it vociferously.

It was Robert who differed from this opinion. He was very decided in the matter. He put it this way: "Fellows don't want a girl forever tagging around and always yelling."

"I should think," said his mother, "that you would want your little sister to play with you."

Driven into a corner, Robert answered:

"I want her to play with me, all right; but if she's going to play, why don't she *play*? She always gets hurt with the least thing and comes home bawling."

To this Alice responded: "It's her feelings that get hurt."

"I don't care what part of her gets hurt," said Robert, "if it gets hurt—and she yells, and the boys say to me, 'Oh, gee! There comes your sister again. Run!'"

"I can run just as fast as lots of you," said Sara. "I can run faster than Skinny Allen. I can run faster than Mud Morse."

"I know you can," responded her brother gloomily, "that's what makes it so fierce. We'd get away lots oftener if you couldn't."

"Lots and lots of things I can do as well as any boys," said Sara with rapidly rising temper.

"Yes, and the fellows make fun of you," he answered. "Whenever there's a bunch of boys around, what do

you suppose she wants to do? Show 'em how she can stand on her head!"

"They like to have me," said Sara. "Mud gives me a piece of chewing gum for showing him how."

"I don't like to see you," her brother responded; "you look like a fool; and when you've done it you look like this."

He put his head on one side and mimicked his sister's engaging smile. "Besides, I don't know any girl who stands on her head."

"You taught me," screeched Sara.

"I know I did, but did I know you'd be doing it all the time if I taught you? Pretty soon they'll call her a tomboy!" he exclaimed to his mother.

CHAPTER XXXVI

IT was while Robert was in this unfortunate mood that Alice undertook to explain to him the virtues of tomboys. Did he want a weak, effeminate sister who later on would be no companion to him, she inquired?

"I don't want to punch the nose of every fellow who calls her a tomboy," he responded to this. "She's awfully unobliging, too. She won't be It when you ask her to."

"Why should I be It all the time, Robert Marcey?" cried Sara with temper. "They want me to be It every single time, just because I'm a girl." Here her lips quivered and beautiful tears trembled in her eyes. "Half the time they want me to be It and shut my eyes and count, and after a hundred or a hundred and fifty they run away and leave me. Is that fair? Would you call that a kind brother, Mother?"

The wrongs of womanhood overwhelmed Sara, and she wept.

"There, you see!" said Robert. "Do you suppose I want a cry-baby around?"

"She wouldn't be a cry-baby if you treated her decently," Alice said.

"No, I wouldn't," said Sara. "They don't treat me decently—they're mean."

"Well," responded Robert, "what makes you want to tag along if we're mean?"

There it was. Why, indeed? There were girls, Robert pointed out, with whom Sara could play.

"Lots of mothers," he added pointedly, "don't want

their little girls to play with us boys. We're too rough for girls."

He gave this out in a condescending tone which irritated his mother.

"I see no reason why you need be so rough," she said. "You must remember, Robert, that this yard is Sara's as much as yours."

"Why can't she play with her dolls like other girls?"

"She probably doesn't want to play with dolls all the time," Alice suggested, from the memories of her own youth.

"No, I don't," said Sara. "I want to play, and I don't want them to be mean to me."

"If you acted all right nobody'd be mean to you. If you didn't tell tales—if you weren't a cry-baby," her brother suggested.

Alice cut him short. "There are others who tell tales besides Sara," she said.

In this fashion, peace—it must be confessed of an armed sort—seemed to have been concluded and a sort of understanding seemed to have been arrived at. Alice clinched it with: "When you boys are playing in the yard there's no reason why Sara shouldn't play with you."

Yet Alice felt vaguely a brute as she said these words, and as her uneasy gaze traveled over the yard it seemed only too frequently Sara's long legs were scissoring the lawn in pursuit of retreating males.

"It's not," she told her husband, "as if half the boys who came here weren't smaller than Sara. It's all Robert's fault. He has the masculine attitude, the fatal conservatism of childhood, and he's got to get over it if he's going to live in the modern world."

This seemed to settle things. But in the world of children things won't stay settled. The unexpected crops out.

CHAPTER XXXVII

IT was only two days after this that Alice witnessed a cryptic performance.

She saw Sara talking with William Travers Jenkins, known as Bill. Sara was at her most ingratiating; it would have seemed she would have moved any boy to admiration; but what did Bill do? At the end of Sara's discourse he flung her violently against the fence. Not daunted by this, Sara pursued him, still sweet. With every evidence of shame and anger he cried rudely, "Shut up! You shut up!" Words unbecoming to a well-brought-up boy like William Travers Jenkins.

The other boys took up the hue and cry, not against Sara, but against Bill. They danced around him in an indecorous manner, and shrilly mocked Sara's beguiling tones. At this, Bill made mud balls, rapidly, hastily, angrily, which he threw at his tormentors. He threw other things, even stones.

Strangely enough, instead of taking part against him it was Sara who performed the act known as "standing up for him." It was Sara who helped throw, disproving that the girl child has naturally a poor aim and cannot throw straight. While she performed these acts of friendly valor, Alice heard him crying menacingly to Sara:

"You get away from here,—we don't want you around!"

Then, anger in his voice and tears in his eyes, he fled the yard, followed by a group of mocking and derisive boys.

Alice was dressing or she would have been sooner on the scene with the historic words of outraged parenthood upon her lips:

"I should like to know the meaning of this!"

"I only told him my dream," said Sara now in tears, "and he shoved me against the fence. I only told him my dream, and now he says he'll never speak to me again."

Robert stood by, darkly disapproving.

"Yes, and what was it you told him?"

Through her tears Sara smiled. Mischief gleamed in her eyes; her finger went to her lips.

"*You* tell," she urged her brother.

"I won't tell it," said Robert.

"What happened?" Alice demanded. "What was it all about?"

Then said Robert: "I don't blame him for anything he threw—only he ought to have thrown them at Sara."

Here Alice's patience reached its limit.

"What I want to know," she said, addressing her daughter, "is what it's all about?"

"Yes, tell her—tell her!" urged her brother, with deep and outraged bitterness.

"I was walking by the fence with Bill," said Sara. "I'd just told him a dream, and then——" Grief again overwhelmed her as well as tears.

"But what had you told him to make him shove you against the fence?" Robert insisted.

"What was it?" Alice wanted to know.

With limpid innocence Sara told them all.

"I had a dream," she said. "You remember Grandma was in and I said to her why was it we couldn't have Christmas when it was fall, and she told me about the Holly and Mistletoe and the Star of Bethlehem, and everything. And I had a lovely dream."

"*A lovely dream!*" snorted Robert.

"Yes, a lovely dream, and I told it to Bill—and see what he did. He threw things at the boys, and the boys laughed, and he won't ever speak to me again."

"But what did you say?" urged Alice.

"All I said was what I dreamed, and it was like this: it was a very short dream. I dreamed we had a Christmas party, and you were there, and Father was there, and Grandma was there, and Jamie was there, and Robert was there, and lots of children were there—and there was Holly and Mistletoe, and I forgot, Bill was there. I said to Bill, 'Oh, see the lovely mistletoe?' And then we kissed each other, and that was all the dream."

Tears again overcame her. "And then—then he threw me against the fence!"

"You see!" Robert cried. "You see! Is *that* the kind of thing to say to any feller? A feller don't want to be kissed by a girl!"

"I *didn't* kiss him—I just dreamed about it, and it was only a play kiss, like it is Christmas time," cried Sara.

"And what did you say to him, sticking your finger in your mouth like a fool? You said, 'Now will you tell me the name of Uncle Zotsby's dog!' As if she'd done something to be proud of."

From the depths of her ignorance, Alice said, "Still I see no reason for Bill having been so rude to Sara."

For once Robert strove for speech.

"How'd you like it if everybody laughed at you? How'd you like it if everybody called you 'Mistletoe,' and you was a little feller and couldn't fight more'n a feller your own size? How'd you like it to be me, and have them all making fun of me on account of her talking like such a simp?"

Before this logic Alice gave way. Sara had offended

against one of the decalogues of childhood. She had been obscurely guilty of the last act of indelicacy. She had done the most awful thing a child can do, which is to cause ridicule to descend upon other children, and worst of all, one of those children was her own brother.

"Why didn't they make fun of *her*?" Alice asked Robert.

"They do," he replied succinctly; "but then they make fun of all girls. Everybody knows that girls are nutty; that's why the fellows don't want them around."

Alice sighed. Apparently, if your daughter was to be any more than tolerated in wholesome games in her own yard she had to be a sort of super-boy, matchless in strength, peerless in tact, and sacrificing all the endearing mannerisms which made her beloved of her elders. And how could one teach Sara a feat like this? It seemed hopeless.

Alice had no comfort from Tom's mother, to whom she told this occurrence as one of the vagaries of childhood. The elder Mrs. Marcey had been reading Freud.

"I would keep a sharp eye on that child," was her contribution; "that dream may have a precocious significance; and I think distinctly that Sara lacked delicacy, as, indeed, she often does."

"If you mean 'lacked delicacy' by telling innocently anything that happens to be thrown up in your mind," began Alice, to which Mrs. Marcey replied austere-ly:

"Well, can you explain to me why she is not contented to play with little girls and dolls and other suitable things?" To which Alice replied:

"For the same reason that I was not, because I wanted some active outdoor exercise. Why should a child be thwarted in its wholesome activities at every turn?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

IT was not long after this that Tom's mother and Alicé took leave of each other with a courtesy that bordered on stiffness, the older lady flinging back the word from beneath her flaunting parasol:

"Well, as you know, Alice, I still belong to that world which believes that girls should be girls and women, women."

Alice told Tom when he returned in the evening, "All I'm trying to get and all that Sara is trying to get, as far as I can see, is a little natural outdoor exercise with other children. If other women bring their daughters up as little prigs, as stationary as any built-in wash-tub, I can't help myself."

"That's all right, my dear," Tom Marcey agreed with her; "but boys have hated from all time to have girls tagging after them. Don't ask me why. They always have and I suppose they always will. And," he went on, "if anybody had talked mistletoe to me I would have gone and buried myself—any natural boy would."

Robert, who unfortunately had sauntered along at his father's closing remark, capped it off with:

"Yes, and right in spring, too! If it had happened around Christmas when people do have it strung up, it would 'a' been different. But just *now*!"

It was the unseasonableness of Sara's dream that constituted one of its worst features in her brother's mind. Dreams of mistletoe and holly and Santa Claus and stockings occurring round about Christmas, or dreams of fire-crackers or flags occurring round about the

Fourth of July, were permissible; but dreams of mistletoe in the spring, and the early spring at that, indicated nothing but an unpleasant and embarrassing perversity in the mind of a young female.

For some days after that Robert refused—absolutely refused, to play with Sara. He was diplomatic.

“Every time she comes around they’ll pick on Bill,” was his explanation, “and then there’ll be a scrap—you don’t want a scrap? You always say you don’t want a scrap.”

It was here that Tom Marcey came to what he would have called the rescue.

“Sara,” he said, “has got to have exercise. On the other hand, you can’t let her butt in on the boys if they don’t want her. I’m going to put up a swing for Sara, and it’s to be hers for certain hours. At those times the boys can’t come near it.”

“You know,” Alice protested, “those’ll be just the hours the boys *will* want the swing.”

“Let it be the hours,” said that illogical male. “Good for them—teach them something!”

Just what it would teach them he didn’t make apparent.

Alice saw exercise in that swing; moreover, she saw trouble ahead.

“Why can’t they use it all together?” she asked.

“Because then Sara would never get a show at it at all, and you know she wouldn’t,” replied Tom. “I’m going to see fair play.”

The swing altered Sara’s spiritual status. From being Tom’s dependent, she was like a person who has been given his own bank account. She now had gifts to bestow. At first Sara and her little friends who gathered from neighboring houses used it for the legitimate purpose of swings, that is to say for swinging. Later

it became a tea table and doll's dishes were spread upon it. With the advent of the swing and its attendant amusements Sara seemed to have forgotten boys and all their works. No longer did she urge to be allowed to play "cops and robbers," no longer did she wish to play hide and seek. One-old-cat and any amount of old cats had lost their joy for her.

Meanwhile, on the fringe of this enchanted ground boys gathered, crying:

"Aw, come on, Sara, let's have just one swing! Aw, come on, we'll push you as high as you want!"

To this Sara replied primly:

"My father says I'm to play in this swing by myself without boys. He thinks boys are too rough."

This last was Sara's invention.

"Come on!" they begged, "come on, let's play house with you, Sara! Let's play school with you."

"No," said Sara, "we girls don't want any boys around. No, Robert Marcey, I won't let you touch my doll. Last time you had my doll you said you was an Indian, and if Mother'd let you use matches you'd have scalped her and burned her, and, anyhow, you buried her and got her awful dirty."

"You've asked and begged to have Sara taken off your hands," Alice told Robert with that logic which is so irritating to childhood. "Now Sara is perfectly happy amusing herself, I see no reason why you can't amuse yourselves alone."

"Well, we want to swing sometimes, don't we?" Robert asked in an aggrieved voice. "We aren't going to hurt the girls, are we?"

"You can use the swing at the hours your father told you."

"Yes, and when's that?" Robert asked, disgustedly.

"When all the older boys are out of school and we'll have to be playing ball with them."

"Playing ball with them," meant permission to carry clubs and chase balls that went out of limits, and perhaps to pass the ball to and fro—an occupation they could have indulged in at any time, but which somehow or other gained a magic when performed under the eyes of the older boys.

CHAPTER XXXIX

A SURPRISING thing happened: The boys who always swarmed over the Marcey place diminished in numbers. Apparently the sight of the swing was too much for them. Only a few jealous souls stayed behind, and these cried to the girls, alluringly, words which had never passed their lips before in their lives.

"Come on and play cops and robbers with us! Come on and play yards off! Come on—we'll pull you up into the barn by the pulley!"

To all of this Sara, as spokesman, replied:

"We're playing the way my father told us to. We don't want to play those games."

"No!" cried out the bolder spirits, "you always hurt us—we always have to be it."

Pressure was brought to bear. A boy threw a horse chestnut which hit a doll on the head. Upon this Sara, puffed with virtue, approached her mother.

"Mother," she said, "do we have to play with the boys if we don't want to?"

"Certainly not," replied Alice. "When you little girls come in at half past four or quarter to five, the boys can use the swing. Until that time, as your father said, you can use it yourselves."

Sara's report of this interview was far from conciliatory.

"Ah-ha!" she said, "Robert Marcey,—ah-ha, William Travers Jenkins! Mother says we don't have to play with you. Mother says she'd rather have us play by ourselves. Go on off and play with Uncle Zotsby and

his horrid dog—I don't want to know his name."

"Well," said Robert in an aggrieved tone, "I want to know why we can't play with *you*?"

"We're playing grown-up games," Sara gave back grandly.

"In grown-up games, aren't there school-teachers and aren't there fathers?" Robert wanted to know.

"Yes," Sara replied with bitter logic, "in grown-up games they have those things, but we don't *have* to have them. We're only playing. We don't *need* you. You wait for your turn, and then you can have the swing," said she with maddening condescension.

This was the crux of it. They didn't need the boys any more. Not needing them, they didn't want them, and the boys, those free spirits forever escaping from the clutches of small girl animals, resented this state of things.

"Aw, come on!" the proud Robert was heard to beseech, "just let us play with you a little."

"No, we won't, Robert Marcey," responded his sister. "When you play with us you hurt us; you break everything; you make everything dirty; you want everything your own way."

She appealed to her mother again.

"Why should we let Robert in when we're having a good time like we are, and, anyway, Father said we don't have to?"

Perhaps Alice Marcey had the germs of feminism in her—who can tell? Maybe instead of being a feminist she had a sense of humor. At any rate her response was:

"No, darling, they don't need to play with you until you want them to."

"Well, we don't want them to," was Sara's pronouncement; "we like it this way. Now we're happy—then

we wouldn't be. They make fun of dolls. They'll take the swing away from us." There spoke a bitter knowledge. "Tell them to go away, Mother."

Watching the crestfallen boys, Alice softened somewhat.

"If you boys and girls could manage to play together without quarreling," she began—but Sara cut her short.

"We can't! How can we? They knock us around—they want everything."

With this brief comprehensive word she returned to her playmates, and Alice went into the house, realizing that Sara had attained what women the world over apparently are striving to attain—spiritual independence and the means of being self-supporting.

CHAPTER XL

NO mother, through the passing of the ages, has been able to discover why bad manners are so catching and permanent, yet how you may leave your sweet-spoken, grammatical child with a surly ungrammatical one, and not even a proper word or a single "g" will rub off upon the one who needs it. It would be a lovely world if righteousness and good manners were as catching as unrighteousness and bad manners!

With each successive year Alice felt that it would be easy to educate children on a desert island, in fact her whole feeling on the matter might have been summed up in the one phrase: If it were not for their little friends—

"Why," she wailed to her husband, "can't they learn any of the good things from them?" She said this after she had announced that if another child of hers said, "Ish kabibble," well—he should see what he should see. By Alice's voice one gathered that he should see things of the most terrifying kind, and, indeed, might very well not all rest with seeing, but would be doings also—they, too, of an unpleasant nature.

"They caught it from Bobby Morris," she explained to Tom.

"You speak as if it were the chicken pox," he replied, with that misplaced facetiousness so irritating in fathers and husbands.

"Chicken pox!" cried Alice. "Chicken pox! I wish it were the chicken pox; it's not dangerous and they get over it. Chicken pox doesn't poison the well-springs

of one's existence like 'Ish kabibble,' and 'I'll say so.' Do you think it's any fun to bring up children to speak decent English, and then have their conversation strewn with 'ain'ts'? Do you think I like to hear Robert talking about his friends as 'de guys' and 'de ginks'? I told him if I ever heard him say 'de' for 'the' again that he would have to reckon with you. Do you suppose it was pleasant when he called me a 'short sport'? Jamie has made up a rhythm to 'kabibble'; and he sings: '*Ka-bib-ble, ka-bib-ble,*' and since Sara has been playing with the Williams it is as if they had taken every 'g' she had in the world and thrown them out of the window."

"It is because you have been kept too closely at home," Tom finally announced, "that you mind it so much. You've been talking about going on a vacation by yourself the last five years. Now, will you finally go?"

"I think I will," Alice agreed. She wrote for rooms by the seashore. She made all her arrangements, and yet as the time for her departure approached, she saw with ever deeper clarity the shortcomings of her children's friends. She tried to be fair; she told herself repeatedly that her children's faults were just as bad 'as any one else's,—worse—but this remained in that realm of facts which one knows merely with the top of one's head.

Gladys Grayson would come and play with the Marceys, and, departing, she would leave behind her the horrid legacy, her whine. How Sue Grayson stood Gladys' whine was a thing Alice never could fathom. Her own children never whined, except after playing with Gladys, and then Alice could be sure that Sara at bedtime would say with a nasal drawl: "*Do-I-have-to-go-to-bed?*"

Alice could not face it. She knew what would happen when she got back. The g's would be gone for good; the

whines would have come to stay. She wrote a second letter to see if the cottage they had the year before was still vacant.

“What is the use of my going away,” she told Tom, “if I’m going to worry about them every minute?” He didn’t argue with her.

CHAPTER XLI

AS every mother knows, all families have invariably one trunk too few. This is one of the mysteries of life; no scientist has yet arisen to explain why it is that with every trunk and bag packed to the bursting point there yet remain bulky objects—sweaters, shoes, rain-coats—to say nothing of toilet articles and the last little odds and ends that one has discovered yet to be tucked away into the non-existent spaces in the trunks.

And it was with this one trunk too few that Alice began to pack trunks for the vacation by the seashore. She packed for a while swiftly and with marvelous good temper, considering that Sara insisted upon helping her.

There is scarcely a woman in the world who does not think of Herod as one of the noblest characters in history if her children happen to be about when she is packing her trunks, and Alice reflected that she was a sort of super-mother in that she could endure Sara's prattle which went:

"Now we put this pile here, and the other pile there and tuck stockings in the corner, and, oh, Mother, can I try on your shawl? If I was a boy, this is how I'd look, Mother." This with Jamie's hat on the back of her head.

This was all very well, but when it came to saying: "Now let's put all my dollies in the trunk," Alice protested.

"Sara," she said, "you can't put all your dolls in."

"Not put in *all* my dollies?" said Sara, and she frowned dramatically.

Alice was in no mood for histrionics.

"You won't want them; where we are going there will be all kinds of other things to play with," she informed her child.

"Who will take care of my childwens," said Sara, "when I am away?"

"Well, Sara," said Alice, "it's very bad for children to travel."

"Oh, no, it isn't; oh, no, it isn't," said Sara. "They need a change. Sea air is good for childwens; you said so; you told Father so."

"Sea air is good for my children, but not for your children," said Alice firmly. "Their eyes drop out and their hair comes off."

"I've got lots without hair, and painted-in eyes," Sara said. "Evelyn Dearie isn't painted. I want my childwens. *You* don't go off without your childwens, Mother."

"No," said Alice to herself gloomily, "but I wish I did. It is not my fault," she reflected in this moment of bitterness. "If I do not, it is because of my conscience."

"I *won't* leave them at home!" cried Sara. "Mices will eat them."

"Nonsense, Sara!" responded Alice tartly. "You can pack one doll in the trunk, and one small one you can carry in the train. That's all. Now, decide at once."

From the outside this would seem to be a simple matter, but in childhood you never know when your words may prove to be as harmful as the sowing of dragons' teeth. At this word Sara began to get out her dolls and set them up in rows around the wall, where they, together with Sara, were extraordinarily in the way. They also seemed to have multiplied like rabbits; it had not occurred to Alice that Sara owned so many dolls.

There were new and beautiful dolls with eyes that opened and shut, there were Kewpie dolls and peasant dolls, there were battered old wrecks that Sara had cherished but had not played with for months, for Sara was not one of your sentimental children who touchingly cherished her oldest doll and loved her the better that her bright color had been kissed away. The broken wrecks were relegated to positions of servitude; they were scalped when the children played Indians, they were thrown to the lions, and passed through as many vicissitudes as Pauline of the Moving Pictures, but respected or loved they were not, except on an occasion like this, when Sara, under the spurious excuse of obeying her mother cluttered up the room with their lamentable fragments.

It was this pretense of obedience that finally exasperated Alice and caused her at length to say:

"I'll pack *this* one, and you can take *that* one," and when Sara's rising remonstrance of, "Oh, why—" was spoken in the tone of Gladys Grayson, Alice's cup of bitterness overflowed. She reverted to the days of her grandmother, and without reasoning and in a tone of authority she said:

"March right down-stairs, Sara, and stay there, or it'll be the worse for you." Such was the menace in her tone that Sara, sniffing but obedient, departed. Later Sara came in the room when Alice's back was turned and deposited something in the trunk.

"Whatever you put in the trunk you can take out," cried Alice.

"What thing?" asked Sara with innocence.

Alice inspected the trunk; there was nothing visible.

"Clear out," she cried. "I don't want to see you again!"

With Sara out of the way you might have thought that

the coast was clear, but Alice, hearing a noise, turned from her packing to look into the candid eyes of Jamie. His arms were full of his cherished cast-iron toys. He smiled at his mother, and without speaking dropped them, the whole armful of them, into the tray containing Sara's best muslin dresses—the ones adorned with ribbons—and Alice's shirtwaists. Having accomplished this he beamed at his mother.

"I packed my things," he said, upon which he took three dancing steps sideways and three dancing steps back again, triumphant and lilting little steps. A mother in times of stress may be stern, she may nip the hopeful but unpractical desires of her children in the bud, but there are no weapons that a normal human being has in the face of the happy assurance of babyhood.

CHAPTER XLII

IN one fleeting moment all this came within the field of Alice's consciousness, and at the very same moment the way out—the ignoble, shameful and indecent way out—dawned monstrosly upon her. She smiled falsely upon her son; she sent him down-stairs on a spurious errand; she hastily thrust his toys into an empty bureau drawer; she salved her protesting conscience with the indecent excuse, "He'll forget all about them by the time we are there," and continued to pack.

She packed as absorbedly as a mathematician solving some problem,—and there is no problem in higher mathematics as absorbing and as difficult as how to make things of a greater bulk fit into a space of lesser bulk,—and then she started at the sound of footsteps on the stairs.

She turned around to confront her entire family of children. All of them appeared with arms overflowing, and overflowing, Alice noted, with Robert's things. He had picked out all his books of the largest size; he had packed in their respective boxes all of his stone blocks; he had picked out games; and his football, his baseball, bat, and a butterfly net were clattering about Sara's heels, and he said these words:

"Wait a minute while I get the magic lantern!"

With the suddenness of a cyclone, Alice's wrath burst. It was not a mere straw that had broken the poor camel's back, it was another full-sized load, and she fairly cried aloud under the injustice of it.

"Have you gone crazy, Robert Marcey?" she cried.

"Not a single one of those things, not *one*, am I going to take with me! March right straight down-stairs!"

"But——" began Robert.

"But me no buts!" replied Alice, regardless of the fact she was acting like Sara at her worst. "Get out! Go! And go quickly!"

Anger mounted hotly; she swept her offspring before her like leaves before the wind. She finished her packing with demoniac energy, and then, to gather together her shattered spirit, she left the packed and open trunks behind her and went forth from her home.

Once down at the seashore one would naturally suppose that one might forget Gladys Grayson. In fact, in the new environment all troubles seemed to have fallen from Alice's shoulders.

As the trunks were opened the children hung round with sniggers that boded no good. As Tom handed her things she disposed them in neat piles for putting away. It was only when a box of stone blocks, which had crushed a shirtwaist, came to view, and her husband exclaimed: "For Heaven's sake, Alice, why did you bring these things?" that Alice realized the origin of her offsprings' untimely mirth. As another box of blocks were discovered, as books were extracted from the less tightly packed trays, louder and louder rose their mirth. Robert laughed till tears rolled down his cheeks, and when from one of Alice's hats there emerged a baseball, he rolled backward and forward, extravagantly, upon the floor.

"I didn't pack *one* of these things, not one of them!" she exclaimed with animation which bordered on exasperation.

"No," said Robert. "No, we sneaked 'um on her. She was awful mean, Father, she wouldn't let us take

a single thing to play with, and Gladys told us how she sneaked things into the trunks. Mothers is always awful fierce, she says, when they're packing; so when Mother was out——" and again mirth overcame Robert; and Sara laughed with shrillness—"and I sneaked in Evelyn Dearie when mother wasn't looking. *Evelyn Dearie is here in this room now!*"

Tom Marcey mopped his streaming forehead.

"I think you children——" he began; but here there came to Alice a vision of herself, thrusting with guilty swiftness into a bureau drawer poor Jamie's cast-iron cars. The sight of the surreptitious toys salved her conscience. She joined her children in their laughter. There was only one sting in it, the shadow of Gladys was still over them.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE cottage in which the Marceys lived was a quiet one; it was on the water, yet it seemed to Alice that the air was filled with distant clamor. Shouts and hoots pierced her consciousness, and across the field of her vision far out upon the sand flats there ran rollicking children. What meaning this had in her own life she did not realize until it was forced upon her by Robert, who was sitting a little way from her on the sand, instructing Sara. This in itself aroused suspicion, for Robert seldom taught Sara anything. He was teaching her to sing a song. Alice could not hear the words, but the air, vaguely familiar, called up to her mind something undesirable. Presently she heard Sara piping: "The high cost of living is only a joke, the high cost of loving——"

"Where," she asked Robert, "where did you learn this song?"

"The people two houses down the beach," said Robert. "There are six of them, children I mean, and they've got a lovely phonograph. Every song they've got. I'm going to learn 'em all!"

Alice said nothing. It seemed as if, processionalwise, there trooped before her mind all the topical songs, songs about Little Girlie Coons, about My Filipino Baby, songs without exception, from a zealous mother's point of view, undesirable. Where did he get them? He seemed to absorb them through the pores. To Alice and to Tom Marcey they remained but vague hand-organ memories, never a word to them more than a bit of

chorus, perhaps; but let a new song appear, and the words and music were Robert's as though by divination. And then Sara learned snips and odds and ends of these songs, and, presently Laurie would be shouting one. Like a menacing specter there came to Alice the vision of those six robust vulgar children two houses away, with their phonograph all ready to corrupt her children's taste, if not their morals, by spouting the vulgarest songs of the moment.

In the face of this menace the head of that saintly child, Gladys Grayson, became in Alice's eyes encircled with a halo. Her whine seemed a lovely thing when compared with the phonograph.

In a futile effort to stave off these evil communications, sure to corrupt whatever remnants of good manners remained to her children, Alice forbade them to go without an invitation to visit the house with the phonograph. Early the next morning, an ample, smiling-faced woman came toward her across the sand. Homely kindness radiated from her; she spoke in a deep throaty voice, so that Alice reflected one would have known, had one met her in the middle of the night, that she was fat; it was a voice that could come only from a throat that was ornamented with three double chins, and neither her accent nor her grammar bore close scrutiny.

"I just come over to tell you to let your children come over whenever they want. I love children, and, laws, the quicker they get acquainted with the neighbors the less nuisance they is around the house! Let 'em come right along with me," she went on. "Come on with me, dearies, and I'll set the phonograph a-going!"

What could Alice do? She was no snob. Kindness and goodness illuminated her neighbor's fat face. Only a heart of stone could have looked at her without a feeling of liking. Her vast lap and her wide bosom were

made for the comfortable pillowing of little children. While she was about, no harm, spiritual or physical, could come to any young thing, and if she and her children did make hash of grammar and manners, well, that could be remedied, Alice considered with stoicism.

So it was that Alice welcomed any diversion from Tobey's, which, it appeared, was her fat neighbor's name. The first diversion that offered was a little boy who with his mother was boarding in an adjoining cottage. He was an enviably neat little boy, a city-bred child of good manners. He hopped up promptly from chairs; he said, "Yes, Mrs. Marcey," and, "No, Mrs. Marcey," instead of bawling "Yep" and "Nope," after the manner of Tobey's. Nor did his cheeks, like the Tobey cheeks, bulge perpetually with "all day suckers."

Alice fondly imagined it was Robert's better nature which drew him to this well-behaved youngster.

Presently why it was that Robert found this child so fascinating came to Alice. She found out through Sara.

"Ah, ha!" Sara cried. "Ah, ha! Robert Marcey, I am going to tell Mother!"

"Go and tell," Robert returned. "Go and tell, because you can't."

"Oh, yes, I can," chirped Sara. "Oh, yes, I can, and I am going to tell, because you won't tell me, and that's why! An' I know why you won't tell me. Because it's bad things, that's why you won't tell me, Robert Marcey."

"Tittle-tattle, tittle-tattle," Robert retorted. He said this, his mother observed from behind the screening vines, on all fours, while with an imitation of a balking mule he flourished his heels at Sara, and for additional insult he went "he-haw, he-haw." This was another of the mysteries that crowded around Alice, for Robert had

never heard a donkey bray as far as she knew, yet he emitted the most lifelike donkey noises in a peculiarly offensive way. As an afterthought he put on the secret look that meant the name of Uncle Zotsby's dog. Sara stamped her foot as per schedule.

"You tell me or I'll tell Mother," she threatened. "You gave him five cents for it," she wheedled. "I'll give you five cents."

"Nope," responded Robert.

"I'll give *him* five cents for it. I got five cents in my bank. I got seven cents," she asserted as she started forth.

"You come back here, Sara Marcey," screamed her brother. "You come back here and leave Ted Jennings alone. This ain't for girls to buy. This ain't for girls to know!" His face was red, deep excitement held him.

Sara, proud of having "gotten Robert's goat," as the Tobey children vulgarly phrased it, continued on her way. Robert dashed into the house.

"Mother!" he called. "Mother! Call her back, don't let her go! She's going after Ted Jennings, she's going to get something from him no little girl ought to know!"

"How do *you* know, Robert!" Alice inquired. He stubbed his toe on the floor.

"Oh, I know," he said darkly, and then he called, "You come back, Sara Marcey, Mother says so!"

At sight of her mother also leaning over the veranda and beckoning, Sara stopped and slowly retraced her way.

"What was it Sara was going to get?" questioned Alice the inquisitor.

"Something," replied Robert, flushing darkly.

"Was she going to buy it?"

"Yes."

"What was it?" Alice probed, now well started on the terrible domestic Third Degree.

"I don't want to tell."

"Did you buy it?"

"Yes."

"Tell Mother." Silence. "Tell Mother what it was." Alice's voice was gentle. She put a poisonously kind hand on Robert's shoulder. She was undermining his fortitude with affection.

"It was—it was," he said, very low, "*a swear!*"

"You *bought* a swear?"

In spite of his embarrassment and reluctance triumph flamed in Robert's face. "Yes," he said, "I bought the worst swear that Ted Jennings knows! I paid five cents!"

Alice waited. Pride in his new accomplishment struggled with his instinct for secrecy. His mother's eyes rested upon his, kind and encouraging: it was too much, the pressure upon him was more than a young soul could resist.

"This is the swear," he volunteered: "Golly! Gosh! Darn!" He hesitated just a moment, "*Damn!* Devil!" The wickedness of it rejoiced him. "But you see," he cried, suddenly becoming the austere brother, "*Sara* mustn't know it; *girls* can't say things like that. *Sara* mustn't never, never hear things like that!" Right before her eyes, full blown, Alice saw the dual standard of morality. "*She* might say it, she hasn't any sense."

"Take care *you* don't say it," Alice admonished. "And I think selling it was disgusting. Never sell a thing like that, Robert, and don't say it."

"Oh, no, ma'am!"

"Well, then," said Alice, "what use was it to you to buy something that you can't use?" She was carefully avoiding emphasizing any glory by being shocked.

"Don't you think you were silly to buy something useless as a silly swear?"

Robert raised his candid eyes to his mother; th
twinkled with humor and with daring.

" 'Tain't useless to me, 'tain't useless," he said. ' can *think* it just as often as I feel like. I'm thinki
it now!"

CHAPTER XLIV

SARA itched for this precious possession of Robert's; he fanned this flame of her curiosity. Alice observed that by a certain expression on his face he made Sara realize that he was thinking of the mysterious and fascinatingly evil thing that he had bought. When she saw Sara jumping up and down, full of impatience and curiosity, and asked Robert what was the matter, and he replied,

"Oh, just thinking," what could a mother then do? After all, your jurisdiction has to stop at their thoughts. So a strained relation grew between Robert and Sara as the month of their stay drew to a close. Indeed, so strained was it that Sara savagely collected mounds and mounds of seaside things, and taunted Robert by saying, "I am going to take mine home with me. Mother won't let you take yours because you snooked your blocks in the trunks," and so firm was her idea that these treasures must return with her that Alice contemplated the return packing with dread.

One evening, shortly before they departed, Sara was not to be found. She was not at the Jennings', and Robert, sent to find her, reported her as not at the Tobey's. They called, but there was no answer to any cry of "Sara!" She had vanished, it seemed, from the face of the earth. Dusk crept on, while anger and anxiety grew in her parents' breasts. Finally Robert came back announcing, "I've found her."

"Where is she?" demanded Alice.

"Under the piazza," answered Robert.

"Under the *piazza!*" Alice replied. "How did she get there?"

"Oh, we've got a way," Robert answered. "There was a lattice loose and we sneaked in."

"What ails the child; hasn't she heard us calling? Tell her to come right out."

"She says she's never coming out any more," Robert reported.

"Sara!" Alice called through the lattice, "Sara, come out!"

No answer but a snuffle.

"Sara, what is the matter?"

Again no answer.

"Sara, mind your mother."

Still silence. Robert wriggled through the hole. Through the lattice he reported:

"She won't come out because she's ashamed." More conferences with Sara. "She's ashamed because she's been sent home. Mis' Tobey sent her home."

"Mrs. Tobey sent her home?" cried Alice. "Mrs. Tobey sent Sara home!" Many a time she had longed to send home Tobey children. "And why," she cried, anger rising in her, "and why pray, should Mrs. Tobey send home poor little Sara?"

Another long conference with Sara then Robert's shocked voice hissed through the lattice: "*She was sent home for teaching The Swear to Stuffy.*"

"But how did Sara get The Swear?"

"Not from me, not from me!" cried Robert. "She got The Swear off Ted Jennings! You told her not to buy it off him. Well, she didn't! She just got 'round him, she just argued to him, and he told her it to get rid of her: she says so herself. He told it to her to keep her from tagging, for the fellers was making fun of him because she tagged after him so—and then she went

off and *sold* it to Stuffy, and she's got five cents right now, and Mis' Tobey heard her, and of course she sent her home!"

Now a woman of character will always turn disaster to some advantage, and while Alice called to her child in a tone that left no place for disobedience, "Come right out from under the house, Sara"; when her daughter was again visible, "That settles it," said she, "not a single shell or stone or *anything* shall you take home with you." And she added, "You will have to leave Evelyn Dearie behind!"

The children in bed, Alice sat on the piazza, reflecting for the thousandth time how easy it would be to bring up one's children in solitude, when a voice from the neighboring cottage smote her ears, a rich throaty voice, a voice that carried.

"If it wasn't for other folks' children!" it said. "Now that Mis' Marcey, she's a reel nice woman, but, law! her Sara, terrible cunning but, oh, such a limb! I don't think my children's better'n other children, but there's just one thing, they *do* use good language, there's not one o' my boy's ever been profane—and now this little Sara Marcey, she comes and teaches my Stuffy cursin'—I caught her at it! Only six years old and she learned him this——" Only a sibilant whisper informed Alice what it was Sara had taught Stuffy. There was silence, broken only by the flap of palmleaf fans, and then to Alice's ears came these words:

"I don't say but what I'll be real glad when them Marcey children go!"

U go off on a vacation there is never anything fit to clean with when you get back, and with all the money gone you have to begin restocking the house.

It always seemed to Alice that trying to adjust income to expenditure in her family was like trying to cover a bed with a sheet too small for it. Once you got it tucked in at the head a discouraging piece would yawn at the foot. Adjust it to a nicety all over, and there would be a fringe all the way round on the outside. Give it a little haul there, and some other part of the mattress would be laid bare and naked.

And out of whom did it come, she asked herself bitterly, all this pinching and straining about things? Out of herself, of course. It was she who was inevitably the uncovered part of the mattress. Whenever she got around to getting a new dress, wasn't it always just at that moment that she discovered that Jamie hadn't a romper to wear; that every child of hers needed shoes, yes, and shoes in several colors and rubbers to match; that Sara's dresses were all high above the knee; and on that very day, as likely as not, Robert would slide a base and come home with a pair of trousers torn to ribbons. How could a mother of children keep looking decent without clothes in spite of all her worries, and the years whizzing by like anything? And what happened to women when they didn't look decent? Any woman can tell you that—they lose their husband's love, of

course! And the clashes between her and Tom over the children getting worse all the time anyway.

At this Alice felt her heart quiver, an awful tightening came to her throat, and a tear splashed down on her account book. And to make sure that the bird of joy should die and never be resurrected again, there was a long list of absolutely necessary things to be got. The list ran something like this:

One new double boiler.

One wash boiler ("I can't see how they rust out so fast!").

A dozen glasses ("Again!").

Laurie says the sash curtains won't stand another washing.

Dish towels ("I'm sure they eat them!").

One broom.

Socks (Jamie).

Socks (Tom).

Three pairs white stockings (Sara).

Six pairs black stockings (Robert).

This was a sample of how it went. It extended, it seemed to poor Alice, until it attained the proportions of a serpent, and a very long serpent at that—the kind of serpent that strangles whatever little joy is left in a fast-aging heart—yes, which even strangles a husband's love. At that she gave an outright sob, and another tear dropped upon this document.

You can see for yourself what a tactless moment it was for Sara to come and put a beseeching hand upon her mother's knee, and remark with a voice in which emotion trembled, her face piteous, entreating, but, definite!

"Mother, I want a motor-car!" Alice turned upon her child with something like fury.

"You want a *what?*" she demanded, incredulously.

"A motor-car," quavered Sara, "and Jamie, he wants one, and Robert wants one! We all want one! *Everybody's* got one!"

"Sara," said her mother sternly, "you're plenty old

enough to know that your father isn't made of money." Indeed, he was not, what with the price of things going up like runaway horses and salaries only crawling along!

"*Why* can't we have a motor-car?" Sara inquired.

"Because we can't afford it."

"What does 'afford it' mean?"

"You know what afford it means!"

Sara fixed her large eyes on her mother. She shook her red head to and fro as if it were a dinner bell that she was ringing.

"Honest and truly, cross my heart, hope to die, I don't!" she announced.

"It means we haven't money enough. We're poor."

"Oh, no, we're not; Poor people don't have parlors—they don't keep a girl—they can go barefoot. They can get as dirty as dirty—they don't never have to have baths. But, of course, sometimes they don't get enough to eat. They *do* get enough to eat, though, don't they?" Sara's voice was piteous. "And oh, they work! Everybody works—the children work—they make money. Poor children chew gum. Poor children eat penny candies—*fierce* red or green penny candies. They catch rides. They sell pond lilies at back doors, and cooks give them cookies. They don't go to school until they're as old as old, and then they go just as little as little." Evidently the joys of poverty rated higher in Sara's mind than its drawbacks, now that she came to think of it. "They can play with Ginnys!"

"Hush, Sara!" Alice felt that her reason was rapidly decaying. "Stop, Sara!"

"Ginnys, yes," said Sara. "Why," she now demanded, "has Ginny Tom's poppa got a motor-car when my poppa hasn't?"

"You mustn't say Ginny," Alice admonished.

"Robert don't say Ginny, he says 'Wop.' And how

can I," she resumed, "how can I say Italian Tom when Ginny is his name? Everybody says Ginny Tom. They're so poor off I can't play with them even—so poor off Laurie drives um away—so poor off you scold me if I talk with um on the street. *They've* got a motor-car!"

"Sara," Alice remarked seriously, "you know very well that I don't let you play with these Italian children, not because they're foreigners, not because they're poor—it's because their manners are bad. I've told you before."

"Laurie says it's nits and language. Oh, gee, you ought to hear *it!* Oh, Mother, it's the funniest thing. Every time Robert passes Tom by he gets his goat a little bit—shies a stick at him or something just so he can hear his language. Oh, it's the funniest thing how he swears—and he's so *little!* I laugh!"

It was one of those times when a moralist finds herself dumb. Sara was unconscious of her mother's displeasure. Her conversation glided along as serenely as a swift little boat before a summer breeze.

"Why, when Tom's father has a motor-car, can't we have one? They're more poor than we're poor—so poor you won't let me play with um."

Alice gave her child a swift glance to see if this statement had been made for the purpose of infuriation. But in Sara's face was candid innocence. Alice gave it up.

"Sara," she said earnestly, "Tom's father spent all his savings for a motor-car because he's had very little pleasure all his life and so has his wife. She's brought up all those children, and mends and scrubs, and has no maid and no new clothes, and now *she's* got a little bit of pleasure for the first time."

"Well," said Sara brightly, as one who comes up with treasure-trove, "why don't we use our *saves*, and why

don't you do the wash and all the work and the beds and sweep, and just have a kimono and we go barefoot? Then we could have a motor-car just like everybody in the world has one."

It was at this point that Tom's mother appeared.

"Good morning, Alice," she said, "and what's my darling Sara doing?"

"I've been having a *lovely, lovely* talk with my mother!" fluted Sara.

From the other room came an all too familiar rumbling noise. Alice knew very well that Jamie had turned chairs upside down and was playing motor-cars. Then her ears were rent by a sound something between a watchman's rattle and the squawk of a dying fowl. Her already frayed nerves gave way. She jumped to her feet and descended on Jamie.

"What, in heaven's name," she cried, "is that awful, awful noise?"

"It's my motor horn," he returned blithely.

"Give it to me at once," commanded Alice; "whoever gave you that thing is a lunatic!"

"I'm that lunatic," Mrs. Marcey here proclaimed with firm displeasure; "the darling has such a touching devotion to motors that when he so admired that little motor horn I bought it for the dear child. I don't know what we're coming to, the way women's nerves of this generation jump at every little thing! Why, I can remember perfectly when my brother and I had a fife and drum corps and used to drum and toot on penny whistles all day long—and *my* mother was glad to hear me do it—she knew then that I wasn't breaking a limb somewhere, and that my hands were out of mischief. The time when my mother used to jump was when she couldn't hear my drum."

It was just after the departure of her mother-in-law,

that Alice sat down and wept. In one afternoon she had lost all hope of any new clothes, her husband's love, her temper, and her nervous system—and the only thing she had gained had been her mother-in-law's disapproval. Her weeping was dismally punctuated by the honking of Jamie's horn.

CHAPTER XLVI

ALICE was not even to be allowed to weep in peace. She had not had time to finish comfortably, not to get half way through, indeed, before a tremendous racket in front of her house made her look out of the window. A voice which was at once both deep and flat was saying:

"Tom Marcey! Ataboy! Tom Marcey, old scout! Ahoy! Avast!"

These cries were accentuated by the honking of a motor horn of the largest size. A car had drawn up in front of the Marceys' house. From this there burst a regiment—in fact, everything seemed to be bursting. A plump lady who came tottering up the walk on precipitously high heels was bursting from an expensive lingerie waist. From where she was Alice could observe a sunburst of the largest size upon her ample bosom. Four children, two stout ones, and two gimlet-eyed lean ones, gamboled about her. She could hear the man's voice:

"Well, Tom, old scout! At last—at last!" And she heard Tom crying in pleased surprise:

"Well, old Bill Mullins!"

"Meet Mrs. Mullins!" Bill shouted. "Some baby, eh, what?"

By this time all the Marcey children had joined the others, and it seemed to Alice that the children had multiplied miraculously, like the loaves and fishes. There seemed to be at least sixteen Marceys and eighty-

three little Mullins. 'Alice could hear Mr. Bill Mullins booming:

"Well, Tom, old top, when we used to train together little you thought you'd see me driving up in my own two thousand dollar car—and my old girl with diamonds all over her!"

Tom stormed up the stairs, crying:

"Say, Alice, Bill Mullins has turned up! You must have heard me speak of him."

"No, I haven't," said Alice. Incredibly, he liked *these* people.

"Oh, yes, you have—he was our town's bad boy. Why, I almost got expelled from school trying to live up to Bill. He was my ideal. I copied him in everything at least one whole year. Why, Alice, of course you have! *He* was the fellow who taught me to play *base-ball!*"

"I've never heard you speak of Mr. Mullins," insisted Alice, still more coldly.

Tom waved this aside. He had weightier matters to discuss.

"Listen here," he said, "they'll all, of course, stay to supper, and you can see for yourself what kind of people they are—their tables just groan! Bill's mother, I remember, was a bang-up cook. It was one of those families where pies get baked by the dozen, not just a little anemic pie or so. And I want you to have some broiled chicken and hot biscuit and a grand peach short-cake."

"Broiled chicken?" interrupted Alice, "Why don't you ask me to serve a few little diamond croquettes, or something?"

"Why, what's the matter with you, Alice?" Tom cried sorrowfully.

"There's nothing the matter with me," said Alice.

"The only thing there's anything the matter with is our bank account. Right at the end of the month, and the bills as high as high already from stocking up after our vacation. And now you say to me *chickens!* How many broiled chickens do you think a family like that, Tom Marcey, a man and his wife and four children and our three—will eat? And how much do you think they are a pound this season?"

"I'm going to have broiled chicken," Tom said in that calm tone, as hard as iron. "When your friends come, I notice everything's all right; but when it's *my* friends—old Bill Mullins, and his wife I've never met before—and you can see she's one of the whole-heartedest and most simple people in the world——"

"I loathe expensive, dirty, white shirtwaists and diamonds!" was Alice's inappropriate rejoinder.

"Well, loathe all you want——" Tom began. Then he patted Alice on the shoulder, "Oh, come, Alice, don't be sore! Come along and help me have a good time."

CHAPTER XLVII

AS she greeted her guests, a tornado of children swept into the front hall by her, the Mullinses crying: "Ma! where's the gum? Ma! Ma! where's the gum?"

"Give me a wad, too, Birdie," commanded Mr. Mullins. "I know some folks don't think gum's elegant, but when you're covering your hundreds on a dusty road, it does help, don't it, Birdie?"

Alice looked upon her offspring tucking the forbidden fruit away in their jaws. She went to the kitchen to placate Laurie and order innumerable broiled chickens.

Looking out of the kitchen window, Alice saw what seemed to her the disintegration of her family. She never had seen less lovely children. They embodied all the unpleasant traits of both parents, and they had doubled their parents' high spirits, which they gave vent to by noise and by monkeyshines. Now one Charley-Chaplained across the grass: he was followed by an ecstatic Robert. Jamie, with his feet at right angles, waddled gravely after. Both the Marcey boys had followed in their father's footsteps; they had found their ideal in Bill Mullins, Junior.

The Mullins boy of Sara's age was engaged in teaching her to make new and extraordinarily unpleasant faces. She heard the little girl cry:

"Let's play *Slump*, and the boys try to get us to walk."

It was a game that needed no explanation to Sara. Both little girls flopped upon the grass, limp and un-

budgable objects. The boys tried to put them on their feet, but it was as if they had grown one with the earth. The boys puffed and pulled: Sara and Beryl Mullins resisted violently by becoming as jellyfishes. It was evident Sara needed no one to teach her complete relaxation. Her bones were non-existent. Feet no longer had any connection with standing. When they put her on them they gave way, and she slid back to earth. The Mullins boys pulled at her as though they would wrench her arms from their sockets. Sara squawked like a peacock. She taunted them with the insults of a gutter-snipe. For the benefit of the Mullinses a vocabulary which no nice little girl should have picked up came to the surface. Then, in the midst of her laughing, she choked.

"Aw, gee!" Billy Mullins cried, "she's swallowed the gum! Stand her on her head. You guys take her by a leg and I'll keep on whacking her," for during this time he had been whacking Sara vigorously, who, purple in the face, still spluttered and coughed.

They took her each one by the leg. They stood her on her head. Like white and pink petals her little skirts hung limply downward over her red curls. It was an indecorous spectacle for any mother to witness. It was no wonder Alice flew out of the kitchen, crying:

"I'll stand no more of this!"

At this moment Mr. Mullins and Tom came out on the piazza and laughed uproariously at this mortifying sight. Polite neighbors passing on the street looked round, surprised, and looked away again. Before Alice could reach them, however, Sara had remarked:

"I'm all right now. You keep hold of my legs and let me be a wheelbarrow."

Upon this, with agility, she walked away on her two

hands, while Bill Mullins held her firmly by the legs and cried to his sister:

"Hey, Beryl, you come and race Sara. Let's have a wheelbarrow race."

"Sara," cried her exasperated mother, "come into the house with me!"

"Why?" cried Sara. "I haven't done nothing. I haven't done a eenty, weenty thing."

"You know what you have done," Alice cried. "You used horrible language."

"I didn't use any different language than all of um." Alas, this was too true. Alice took refuge in the fact that Sara had been standing on her head.

"But I didn't stooded myself on my head!" wailed Sara.

A savage instinct almost mastered Alice. She felt a desire to spank everybody in sight. She would have liked to begin with Jamie, who was Chaplining around with grotesque solemnity. She knew he would continue to do this for weeks and weeks. She wanted to spank Sara, and oh! how she wanted to get a hand upon each and every Mullins. But instead she had to listen to Bill Mullins booming forth:

"Aw, come, Mis' Marcey, let 'em have some fun! When kids is oatsy, shows they're healthy!"

It seemed to Alice no less than a nightmare when, after a supper which the Mullins unanimously termed "swell eats," she saw all seven little children pass by the window waddling after the manner of that eminent film artist, Mr. Chaplin, and all of them chewing gum. Now Chaplining and gum-chewing were two things upon which Alice had set her foot. Tom's eye caught hers. A look of sympathy passed between them. Mr. Mullins flooded on serenely, saying:

"Yes, sir, I cleaned up a hundred thousand simoleons

in the first three years. You ought to have seen me work my way up from a flivver to this one I've got."

By her husband's swift look Alice realized that peace between them was restored, and that Tom Marcey had indulged in as much reminiscence concerning the little red schoolhouse as he had a mind for just then. So great was his reaction that Sunday morning at the breakfast table, he glared fiercely at his offspring and said:

"Let me catch one of you waddling around like a goose, or chewing a piece of gum, or saying 'youse guys,' or in any other way acting like congenital idiots or defectives instead of normal children, and I'll punish that child as I have never punished any child before."

CHAPTER XLVIII

THERE was a dead silence. There was no doubt about it that Tom Marcey was in earnest. The children ate with downcast eyes. You could see even a tear coursing slowly down Sara's smooth cheek. Tom Marcey drew a long breath and smiled at Alice.

"Alice," he said, "I've been thinking you ought to go and take a vacation,—anyway go off for a week—go off for a week-end. You need a change."

"Maybe I will," she reflected.

The children still were quiet after their father's outburst.

"What peace!" said Tom. "Beautiful old times those when children were seen and not heard."

"Yes, it's peaceful now," said Alice pessimistically, "but what of this afternoon? What's to prevent my cousin Melinda coming? What's to prevent those awful people that took such a fancy to you last year descending? What's to prevent an influx of those relatives of yours in Pennsylvania any minute? Do you realize that I've got any number of second cousins scattered around Boston and its suburbs? Why shouldn't *they* come? Look what's come this month already. Think what it's done to the family! Look what it's done to the *bills*! There's no security any more in living in the country. Space isn't any more. Formerly, when people whom you didn't like were tucked securely away in some obscure place you could be pretty sure you wouldn't see them. Now look at it! Here we are swarmed over by Mullinses one day—what's to keep off the *Brewsters*?"

"Good heavens!" said Tom, "you don't think that?"

"Why shouldn't they? After Mullinses anything could happen—Brewsters or anything."

"What's a Brewster?" piped up Sara.

"A Brewster's an animal. She gets a strangle-hold on you and never lets go," explained her father.

"What's a Brewster like?" Sara inquired further. She had forgotten her griefs. Her eyes gleamed. There was something about her father's description that arrested her imagination.

"Brewsters are like three dour women draped in black. They look like human beings, but they're really vampires."

"Oo-oo-oo!" cried Sara, having a delicious scary shiver.

"Ghouls, too," her father continued, "they haunt graveyards."

"Oo-oo-oo!" said Sara again. "Sumpin' like ghosts?"

"Worse," her father told her impressively.

Here Sara banged a little fist on the table until the dishes rattled.

"I'll tell you what, Father," she declared, "we won't let um in. If I see three black ones coming in here me and Robert and Jamie'll drive them off. We'll throw things at um! We won't let um in! We'll set Uncle Zotsby's dog on 'em."

"No, you won't set Uncle Zotsby's dog on 'em. I'm not going to keep 'em off," growled Robert, deep in the gloom into which he had retired at his father's admonition, for it brought to his mind only too plainly the bitterest disappointment of his life, which had occurred the night before when Mr. Mullins had offered to take him off for a tour in his car. "Pack him in as easy as not," he had repeatedly urged. Since then life to Robert had seemed a stagnant pool. He realized that

life without Mullinses at best was going to be a blank and dismal affair, but to cut Mullinses, and a motor trip in a magnificent car, out of his life at one swift blow had been too much for his soul. His rebellion now found vent in these sour words:

"I wish Brewsters *would* come. I wish they'd come and stay!"

He rose to his feet and moodily left the room. Sara cast a reproachful glance after him.

"Oh, dear!" she said, "oh, dear, now he's going to be trying all day!" Then she returned with zest to her former conversation. "Do they look like people, Brewsters?"

"Yes," said Tom, "they have the human form; but that's all.

Here Jamie let his spoon fall with a clatter. Alice turned toward him and observed that he was staring at his father wide-eyed. The menace of the Brewsters had for some reason arrested his imagination as had nothing else before. Sara, also, observed her brother. To see him thus stirred from his usual tranquil calm made the thought of Brewsters all the more menacing and delightful.

"How will they come—on broomsticks?" she asked.

"Broomsticks? Of course not! How would any disagreeable thing come? In a motor, of course. They'll come in a big black motor, and I've no doubt their chauffeur will look like a hearse driver."

For the next little while peace brooded over the May household. It was so intense that presently Alice went to find out where her children were. Robert lying on the lawn on his stomach, his eyes fixed on the sky. He was brooding deeply and bitterly over his grief. It was evident that parents seemed to him inimical to all the joys of childhood. When Alice called

to him to find out where Sara and Jamie were, he answered in surly fashion that Alice could "search him."

It was Laurie who supplied this information. She supplied it in a high and angry tone.

"Will you step this way, Mis' Marcey, and rout me out them two from underneath my bed, and me wanting to dress for mass an' late an' all. An' not a foot will they budge, an' Sara saying 'Oo-oo-oo' in a tone that would bring goose flesh on you. She keeps on like a daft one saying to me, 'Git out, ye Brewsters!' an' thin Jamie he says 'Oo-oo-oo' like a banshee."

As Alice entered Laurie's room "Oo-oo-oo" came in Sara's voice, making what was known to her as a "ghost noise."

"Here's another, Jamie! Oo-oo-oo!" Then, as her mother peered under the bed, "Oh," said Sara in her natural voice. "Sweet Mother! I thought you was some one else."

"What are you doing underneath that bed, getting your white dress all dirty and you, Jamie, with your clean Sunday clothes and white socks? Come right out from there. What *are* you doing?" she demanded as they emerged, crumpled and flushed, and with marks of dust upon them that proclaimed to Alice that Laurie was not as thorough as one would have liked to have believed her. To her impatient question they chirped in chorus:

"Brewstering!"

"Stop it!" commanded Alice. "It's a very silly thing to do. I wish you'd go out and play in the sunshine."

They trotted off together and Alice heard them making ghost noises as they went, their imaginations still captivated by the Brewster menace.

The older Marceys went out to inspect their garden, and again a Sabbath peace seemed to brood. But Alice

felt that this peace was illusion, that under the fair surface of a calm Sunday morning, things were brewing, as if some kind of storm of the spirit were coming up. It in no way surprised her when the sound of dispute arose, and Robert's voice in loud anger.

"You keep off me or I will, I say!" and then a shrill wail of pain from Sara. She flew around the corner of the house, followed by her brother.

"He's done it!" she shrilled. "He's done it—what you told him never to, no matter what I did. He's done it! He hit me!"

"Yes! And why—and why?" cried Robert, with the indignation of the outraged male; "they was hiding behind trees and Jamie shot arrows at me, and Sara came out and kicked me and said, 'Get out, you Brewster!'"

"But he knew I was in fun," wailed Sara; "he knew I was in fun. I didn't mean to hurt him, and he—he meant to hurt me."

"But I didn't hurt you," said Robert.

"But you *meant* to hurt me, and I didn't mean to hurt you," sobbed Sara. "And now, Father, now give it to him! You said last time he did it he was too big, and that men never hit women, and you said you'd give him——"

"Now, see here, Sara," her father commanded, "stop crying. And, Robert, you go into the house. Peace," he cried, "is what I want, and peace is what I intend to have. Who started this silly Brewster business, anyway?"

"You did," Alice informed him. He ignored this loftily.

"You did, Father," Sara corroborated.

"There'll be no more of it," her father informed her.

"But what *can* I do?" Sara inquired. "I can't Brewster; I can't Chaplin."

CHAPTER XLIX

IT happened next day. Afterward Alice believed that it was either second-sight or telepathy that had brought the doleful name of Brewster to her mind.

The Brewsters were three sable-hung and well-to-do maiden ladies who had been a dark cloud on the horizon of Alice's young girlhood. During the time of her engagement, whenever she had specially wished to see Tom alone, the Brewsters, with mourning dripping from them like black seaweed, had appeared. They had, it seemed, an incredible number of relatives, and these relatives had a habit of dying off like flies; and no wonder, Tom had said, for let any one of their numerous tribe be ill and the crape-hung Brewsters, one or more, would appear, with a funereal face, ready to nurse a sufferer through a last illness. They reveled in death-bed scenes. The excitement of their lives was funerals, and they said openly they never expected to go out of mourning.

They had some vague relationship to Alice, and when they descended and asked in funereal tones:

"How is your dear mother to-day?" as though prepared to hear the worst, anger had risen in her heart, for Alice's mother was a young-looking and healthy woman.

When Alice came down the street from the butcher's the next day and saw a strange motor-car in front of her house, her heart sank.

"I hope to heaven," she thought, "whoever they are, they're only calling. I *hope* they haven't come to stay."

Another orgy of chickens, and Alice's hope of a new hat, bright vision which still beckoned her afar off, would vanish forever.

The motor was an elegant but melancholy-looking affair. The man who sat in it was decorous and elderly and sad of appearance.

"Who's come?" asked Sara. Then she whispered to her mother, "*Do you suppose it's Brewsters?*"

"Certainly not," said Alice shortly. "Of course it isn't! It couldn't be."

"Why couldn't it?" asked Sara, still in her hushed whisper. She clung closer to her mother and shivered theatrically. Seeing that her child hoped it *was* Brewsters, Alice longed to shake her.

In the sitting-room she heard the voice of her Mother-in-law, pitched in the tones of one who is making conversation under difficulties, the voice of one who, even in the presence of pain and suffering, will not be downhearted. There was even a note of defiance in her relative's voice. Alice felt this even before her eyes fell upon the three black-robed visitors. They all rose at her entrance and held out six crepe-laden arms to greet her.

"Oh, my dear," they said, and a hint of tears was in their voices, "how like your dear mother you are!"

They spoke in a tone as though Alice's mother were recently dead. One could have sworn they had come on a visit of condolence. Had Alice not received a cheerful letter from her mother that very morning she might have thought them the bearers of sinister news. As it was, she choked back with difficulty her desire to laugh. She knew if she did laugh she would continue to laugh until she wept, for hysteria lay behind it.

She managed, however, to greet them appropriately, but without her eyes meeting those of her Mother-in-law,

who, Alice knew, shared her feelings concerning the Brewsters.

"And that is your dear little girl," said one of the ladies solemnly.

"She's the picture of your dear aunt Lydia, your aunt that you will hardly remember!" remarked the eldest Miss Brewster. Here Alice faltered forth:

"Sara Dear, come and meet Miss Brewster."

But, instead of coming to meet Miss Brewster, Sara the valiant, the beater-off of Brewsters, flew to her mother and clasped her frantically around the knees.

"Oo-oo-oo-oo!" she cried. "It's *Brewsters!* Oo-oo! It's *BREWSTERS!*"

Then she fell to sobbing. One could distinguish among her words:

"Ghouls! Vampires!" and yet she was coherent enough, so that something penetrated not only to her Grandmother, but to the three ladies who looked at her, first with astonishment and then with a frozen dignity. It was only too plain that Sara had not heard of Brewsters for the first time, and heard of them unflatteringly. An awful silence reigned among them. After which Sara cried, "*I'll set Uncle Zotsby's dog on 'em!*"

"Hush, Sara!" said Alice inadequately.

Tom's Mother exclaimed, "Well, of all things!"

A cautious little head, the head of Jamie, peered round the corner of the door. His mouth was tightened into a little line. Courage was in his eyes. In his hands he held a bow and arrow, constructed from part of an ancient hoop, the homemade arrow blunted at the point in the hope that it might not inadvertently put out some one's eye. Jamie shot his arrow, which clattered harmlessly upon the floor, and then fled. At this Alice found her voice.

"I must find out what ails Sara," she faltered, and led her weeping child away.

When Alice returned after ministering to Sara there were no Brewsters. Of all the company there remained only Mrs. Marcey.

"Well, of all things, Alice Marcey!" she cried. "I never have liked the Brewsters, but I will say I think they have had trouble enough in this life without your making a bugaboo of them to your children so that they shriek with terror at the sight of them. Pierced to the heart is what they were! And how can you be so lacking in heart yourself, not to speak of Tom? I've never so wished that the earth would swallow me up! They've gone away, poor things, with the firm conviction that the least you have done was to threaten Sara that the Brewsters would get her if she wasn't good!"

Robert appeared in the doorway. His face was flushed and there was a vague swelling under his left jaw. He yawned crossly.

"Mother," he said, "I wish you'd rout Jamie out of my room. He's sitting in the corner talking about Brewsters, and he woke me up."

"Woke you up!" cried his grandma. "Whatever were you doing sleeping at this hour of the day, Robert?"

"I don't know. I'm hot—I've got a headache. I don't know what makes me so cross—I guess it was because I couldn't go motoring with the Mullinses."

"This child's got a fever," his Grandmother announced. She ran an experienced finger beneath his jaws, at which Robert said "Ouch!" "What he's got is *mumps*," declared his Grandmother; "it's not for nothing that I nursed Tom and all his cousins through the mumps."

It was here that Alice Marcey made a cryptic remark. It was:

"What's mumps to motors?"

Her mother-in-law looked at her sharply. Alice had never taken the sickness of her children thus calmly.

"Well, I'm sorry for you, Alice. I won't say another word about Brewsters, though scandalous is my name for it. Now," she pursued, "I suppose you'll be quarantined. You may as well have the red card tacked up on your house, 'Contagious Disease,' at once, because I suppose they'll all come down. Most likely you're in for a siege."

"They'll have to have it sooner or later," Alice returned with philosophy.

For with that red ticket upon her house, for a time, she knew, she was safe from both Mullinses and Brewsters, from Tom's cousins in Pennsylvania and her own from near Boston.

CHAPTER I

MUMPS cannot last forever. As soon as the children were well, their Grandmother proposed taking the children to town to see "this fairy play" as a sort of reward. Alice was doubtful.

"There'll be nothing but bumps," was what she opined. "If Sara goes, nothing on earth will keep her from trying to fly afterward." To this Mrs. Marcey replied loftily:

"I shall explain everything to Sara. You wouldn't be such a silly little girl, would you, Sara, as to think you could fly?"

Sara's eyes widened. New horizons were evidently before her, but her mouth replied dutifully:

"Oh, no, Grandma."

It was the day after the children had been to "Peter Pan" that Tom's peace was disturbed by thumping sounds upstairs. When he inquired, "What's that?" Robert replied scornfully:

"That's Sara flying, of course! She's flying from your chiffonier. She tried the bed and she tried the bureau, and she said they were all too low to get started from, so now she's on your chiffonier, flying."

Sara had always had a taste for fairies, but the play of "Peter Pan" had the effect of a forcing-house. Fairies became with her a savage passion. There was no one in the house who did not have to read fairy stories to her. She even showed symptoms of learning to read. But it was Mrs. Painter who put into her head the idea of being a fairy herself.

Mrs. Painter, who lived three doors from the Marceys, was an amiable and extraordinarily voluminous widow. She had innocent hobbies, which included a large number of tame canary birds which flew at large around her drawing-room and perched upon her shoulder, and she had a garden in which she cultivated the most fragile flowers. For the rest, she was very blonde, with eyes more innocent than Sara's, and she knew more fairy tales than any one in the world. She also had a great fancy for little girls.

It was from Mrs. Painter then that Sara returned walking as though on air, a little crown of flowers around her head and a wand in her hand. When Robert would have scoffed, he found her imperturbable. She even had the audacity to reply:

"I've just as much right to fairies and stars and things as you've got to spiders and pollywogs, Robert Marcey! Mrs. Painter says so!"

After that it was a familiar spectacle to see Sara in a flowery crown and with a fairy wand, dancing about the garden. It is true, when asked what she was doing, she replied, "Conjuring." But things did not stop there.

Underneath the comparatively peaceful domestic exterior Alice felt things brewing. There are times, as mothers know, when the domestic kettle can brew as sullenly and darkly as any witch's caldron. Alice came to the conclusion that there must be some special fire which was setting it bubbling in so sinister a fashion beyond that which Tom Marcey called the "temperamental incompatibility" of Sara and Robert. Robert was behaving in a dark and mysterious fashion, and he frequented the public library as never before. Whenever he departed for this worthy spot Sara would run to Mrs. Painter's.

Alice was looking over these facts one after the other, and trying to fit them into some coherent design, when Tom's mother came in, leading by the hand a loudly weeping Sara. She ran to her mother, tears glistening in her eyes.

"You know Robert? You know him?" she sobbed. "Well, Robert, he—he——" Her face quivered with emotion. "He made me lose all my manners right in company, he——" Her voice broke again, and she paused to sob luxuriously. "Grandma," her accusing finger pointed at her Grandma, "brang me home."

Grandma had sat down ponderously upon a chair, and now explained the situation thus:

"Robert certainly does pester his sister to death, but that is no reason why a little lady should dart out her tongue at her brother like a serpent, and then slap him in the face. What they fight about, I can't tell you!"

"Oh, yes, you can, Grandma!" said Sara with more definiteness than politeness. "Oh, yes, you can! He's mean to my fairies! You heard him being mean to my fairies. He says because I got three gray hairs out of your hairbrush and burned 'em it don't make me any more powerful! But it does!"

"Ah-ha!" said her Grandmother. "That's where my hairbrush went to, is it?"

A dimple that had in it triumph, deceit and shyness flickered for a second at the corner of Sara's mouth.

"Honest," she said, "honest, Grandma, I meant to put your hairbrush back."

"Now I understand," her Grandmother went on, "why this child has been so attentive to me for the last few days, coming to visit me and then buzzing around and darting up-stairs every few moments like a piece of thistledown. Just for a chance at my hairbrush!"

"Well," demanded Sara, "where else was gray hairs?

Mother hasn't any; Father hasn't any; Laurie hasn't any; Jamie hasn't any. Nobody's got none but you! I had to have 'em!"

Grandma waved a majestic hand.

"You heard her say it yourself. If any one had told me that my granddaughter would come to my house under cover of wishing to see her grandma, for the strange reason of getting three gray hairs from her hair-brush to burn, I wouldn't have believed it. It would have seemed too fantastic and too morbid. Nor is it what you can call a laughing matter," for a smile was beginning to lurk around Alice's mouth.

"Why did you want to do it?" Tom inquired. To which Sara made this cryptic reply.

"How was I to get the Witch of Endor and the three White Sibyls if I didn't get three gray hairs to burn?"

And when Tom asked, "What do you mean?" Sara only answered:

"My face is tired with talking."

"Her face is tired with talking—nothing!" said Robert. "What her face is tired with doing, Mother, is chewing gum."

To this the three adults in various keys responded:

"Chewing gum?"

"Why, chewing gum's forbidden!"

"My little granddaughter wouldn't chew gum, would she?"

"She'd chew anything," said Robert. "She'd chew candle wax; she'd chew gum off trees; she'd chew gum off gum shoes if it chewed right. That's what makes me sick about Sara. I won't take her out any more. I can't take her out any place without her begging gum off boys. Sometimes when Sara begs gum off boys it makes me just want to sink right through the floor."

Sara looked at her brother with an astute eye.

"What for made you give me gum, then, to shut up?" she inquired. Robert blushed a dark red. "He's mad with me, but he's not mad with me about gum." She turned a maddening glance on Robert. "He's mad because I get his goat!"

At this Robert flounced out of the room and Sara ran after him calling loudly:

"Robert—Robert! I didn't mean it. Honest, I didn't mean it!"

Mrs. Marcey had let a heavy and portentous silence fall in the room, and then said, with the air of one making the remark for the first time:

"Steps have got to be taken. Sara's character is becoming disintegrated. When a child of Sara's age darts out her tongue at her brother as naturally as a serpent, chews gum and lurks around her Grandma's house for the purpose of acquiring three gray hairs to burn, and later explains it's because she wants the Witch of Endor—whatever she may mean by that—and then says vulgar things about goats, I should think you could see for yourself that it is time for a tighter rein or at least a proper governess."

CHAPTER LI

ALL was peaceful until supper time, when Laurie came in carrying a glass dish filled with stones.

"Mis' Marcey," she announced, "look at this. This is my dish for the apple sauce, and see what I find in it! And in more places than this do I find 'em! In beds, under tables, in vases! Glory be! 'Tis few places you can go without finding pebbles left about as if the Little People had left 'em, and me knowing all the time it's nothing but that Robert Marcey."

"You leave those alone," cried Robert. "I didn't have any good place to put 'em in my own room. If I had dishes the right kind in my own room I wouldn't have to put 'em in the apple sauce dish."

"Yes, but what are they?" his father now asked.

"I'll tell you what they are!" cried Sara.

"Look out! You'll break the luck!" Robert muttered.

"It won't break *my* luck!"

"You'll break the luck," he repeated sullenly, "and if you break my luck, there's *The Attic Fairy!*" he whispered.

A curious frightened look flashed across Sara's face. She said no more. Suddenly she clapped her hands and cried out: "But I burned 'em! I burned 'em! They're lucky stones. That's what they are. They're all black, and they have white spots or rings. They're lucky stones!"

"Lucky or unlucky," said Alice, "I can't have stones all over the place."

"You know every child has got to go through this

phase," said Tom. "You can no more escape this phase or the tree-climbing and cave-building age in your children than the human race has been able to escape it. If you are modern, as you pretend to be, you can't suppress things like lucky stones."

All through supper Tom skirted the subject. His curiosity had been piqued by the phenomenon of the Witch of Endor, the burning of the "three gray ones," the lucky stones, and the form of Robert's obscure threat. But nothing more was to be got from the children. They exchanged knowing looks from time to time which showed a wisdom and knowledge shared by them beyond their elders.

Alice watched them with attention. It seemed as though her children were living in some fourth dimension of the spirit which she could sense but not enter, and which would continually tease her imagination until she too could step within it.

Tom arose from the table and with the evening paper in his hand started for the library. His toe stubbed against some heavy object.

"What the dickens is this?" he cried, and, stooping, raised in his hand what was apparently a black cobblestone of the largest size, encircled with white.

The day of philosophy was over. Interest in folklore had fled. He threw open the window and flung the stone far out into the night. From Sara burst a terrible cry.

"My lucky stone!" she wailed. "Oh, my lucky stone! Oh, my luck has gone!"

At this, with an impish gleam in his eye, Robert leaned over and whispered:

"The Attic Fairy!"

Later Alice observed Robert crouched close to the open fireplace, sibilantly talking up it, while Sara, whose

fear was partly theatrical and partly real, shrank into the window and looked at him with great eyes.

"I thought you didn't believe in fairies," his mother said to him. Robert smiled a cryptic smile at his mother. There burst from Sara a wail.

"He believes in 'em, and he's got 'em. Fairies and fairies—all sorts—just because Mrs. Painter told me I was a little fairy and the fairy queen of all her canary birds he goes out, and gets fairies himself. He's got an attic fairy up the attic who gives him gods!"

"She flew her nose so high over being a fairy queen that I had to do something," growled Robert. "Now I've got the king and queen of the fairies."

"You haven't! You haven't!" screamed Sara. "Mrs. Painter gave me all the leprechauns. She told me about the three hairs and the Witch of Endor. And she'll get me things yet your fairy can't get you." But Robert resumed his mumbling up the chimney.

It was here Jamie piped up:

"I want fairies."

"You can have some of mine, darling," cried Sara. She shot a glance full of suspicion at Robert. "But if I give him mine, Robert's got to give him some of his. Make him give the attic one!"

"Oh, no, you don't," said Robert craftily, "and I won't give him any, because Sara'll make Jamie use them for her."

They went to bed in an unsatisfactory state of mind. Later Laurie called Alice to come upstairs.

"Sara's whispering and whispering to Them until you'd think 'there they are!' And Jamie's eyes is popping from his head."

Next morning Alice was awakened by a piercing cry. "You sha'n't have the big gods of Egypt!" It was Sara's voice which screamed with its full volume of

rage. "You sha'n't have 'em! I don't want only just the little, mean, rat-faced god from Egypt. I want the big ones—and I'm going to have 'em!"

Tom looked at his wife.

"Insanity is the only thing that ails those children," he remarked with calm.

As they dressed they could hear the high names of ancient gods thrown about with abandon. From the back stairs came Laurie's voice soothingly:

"Never mind, darlin', about them haythen gods of Robert's—bad luck to the ugly ole faces of 'em! Just you tell him Laurie'll give you the Banshee—that'll fix him! An all the fairies from the Pinwell in the Vales of Antrim!"

"Now they're *all* insane!" said Tom. "You won't have to send any one away. All we need is to get a keeper to come here."

Presently Alice saw him get a heavy book of reference. As he read a smile spread over his face. He whispered to Sara. As they came in to the breakfast table Robert said:

"All the Greek gods and all the Roman ones."

"I've got all the Indian ones!" Sara countered, "and there's more of them than any other kind!" She looked toward her father for affirmation, but Tom was entrenched behind his morning paper.

Later Robert left the house, informing Alice that he was going to change his library book. Sara peered after him out of the window.

"I know where he's gone," she announced. "He's gone to get more gods. More fairies and things he's gone for." For in Sara's mind the august deities of ancient civilization and the fairies were precisely upon the same footing. In retaliation she went to Mrs.

Painter's, and returned triumphant with the Three Fates.

During the days that followed it seemed to Alice that there were marshaled in invisible array all the gods of antiquity—the elephant-faced god of India and the rat-faced god of Egypt. The Witch of Endor, helped by the Irish fairies—in which Sara had a “corner,”—would rout the Aztec deities of which Robert had possessed himself. They marshaled them from the north and from the east. A motley company stalked ceaselessly through the children's conversation, while Robert encouraged Sara to brood over the loss of her lucky stone.

Nor did it comfort Alice at all that Tom explained to her that this was fine training in mythology. With this her Mother-in-law disagreed.

“Even if the gods of which the children talk,” she proclaimed, “are heathen and obsolete, this kind of goings-on will make them too familiar with the Deity. Moreover, this house is getting positively spooky.”

CHAPTER LII

IT was true. The house *was* spooky. Robert found a book from which he learned incantations. Sara spent her time in conjuring. The Marcey house seemed peopled with strange presences, and Jamie, who during this duel was neglected, wept.

Alice felt she had enough to bear without her Mother-in-law arriving with one large yellow balloon—just *one* single balloon, and that for Sara. Every one who has any children knows that there is nothing more destructive to the domestic peace than a present to one child in the family alone, and Alice knew only too well that Sara would use this toy for the purpose vulgarly known as “getting Robert’s goat.”

Alice was right. Sara used her balloon shamelessly, not only for the discomfiture of Robert, but, this being a moment when all males were distasteful to her, she flaunted it before the eyes of the poor, famished Jamie. Alice was glad when, with a peacocking walk, Sara and her balloon departed to Mrs. Painter’s. Alice cast a searching look on her Mother-in-law, hoping that she might have noticed what havoc this inadequate present had caused. But the elder Mrs. Marcey was knitting placidly; she had brought her work for the afternoon.

Very soon came the sound of Sara’s feet upon the stairs. But instead of descending upon her mother as she usually did when she returned from Mrs. Painter’s, full of new fairy lore and tales of canary birds who ate from one’s mouth, Sara continued up the stairs. Instead of rushing up them with a glad little patter, Alice

noticed that Sara walked slowly, as though suddenly stricken with age. Then, as some friends came in, Alice forgot her child. It was not until they had left and dusk was falling that she turned to her Mother-in-law with the question:

"I wonder what's happened to Sara?"

Another ten minutes went by. Still no Sara. Alice went through the rooms of her house, calling. There was no reply anywhere. Alice went down the back stairs to the kitchen, but Sara had vanished. She had come into the house and the house had apparently swallowed her up.

"It's this fairy business," Alice grumbled. "It's getting worse than Evelyn Dearie." Indeed, since the coming of the fairies and Sara's numerous bumps from her attempts to learn to fly there had been no peace in the Marcey household.

Alice began a systematic search. She looked under beds; she searched in closets. Anxiety clutched her heart—an anxiety which grew with each moment. It communicated itself to her Mother-in-law and to Laurie, until the house echoed with voices crying for Sara, while the women went around, opening and shutting the same closets and looking beneath the same pieces of furniture.

One thing was sure: Sara must be in the house somewhere. To go out, she would have had to pass through the kitchen or they would have heard her coming down the front stairs.

Alice had several times gone up to the attic, but in the attic were no hiding places, unless one hid behind trunks. At last, as no place remained except the attic, she took a candle and again went up-stairs. From one corner came a little sound of hopeless sobbing. Alice followed this sound, and in a wide-yawning Saratoga trunk was Sara. Sara had opened the trunk and got in to sob

her heart out in the hopeless despair of childhood—a despair that knows only the moment and cannot feel the dawn of any to-morrow.

The sound of children crying this way is one of the most terrible sounds in the world, because when grief, unmixed with any anger, overtakes them, there is nothing for them except hopelessness.

In all Alice's life she had never heard Sara cry like this. Sara usually cried loudly and resentfully, or, if her feelings were hurt, two lovely tears as clear as jewels overflowed from her eyes—tears evidently meant to be kissed away. She had cried for grief, of course, but before, with a grief that could be comforted. One did not have to tell Alice that this grief of Sara's, whatever it was, was hopeless. Something irrevocable had happened to her little spirit that she would always remember. Alice knelt beside the trunk.

"Sara," she said, "Sara, darling! Tell mother what's the matter."

At the sympathy in Alice's voice Sara shrank away. Her sobbing changed to a low moan of grief. Nothing could comfort her.

There came Grandma's heavy foot upon the steep attic stairs. She puffed slightly as she came across the room.

"Why, of all things!" she said, and then her eyes fell with compassion upon Sara's little flattened figure, face down upon the bottom of the big trunk.

"Well, of all things," she repeated in a voice of deep sympathy. "Why, sweet Sara—Grandma's darling! What's the matter, Sara darling?"

As her mother and grandmother implored her to tell them what was the matter, for nothing deserved tears like this, Sara remained speechless and continued to cry the more. It was then that the Grandmother had a moment of insight.

"Leave her," she whispered to Alice, "leave her alone a moment. Send Robert up to her. Perhaps she'll talk to Robert." For childhood will confess to childhood when words fail them before grown-ups.

They waited what seemed an interminable time, asking each other:

"What could be the matter with her?"

"What do you suppose has happened?"

At last Robert returned. His face was serious.

"She's done an awful thing," he announced; "*she's killed Mrs. Painter's tamest canary*. She didn't mean to, of course. She just came in with her balloon, and the canary's always loose, and it was scared and dashed its head against the mirror! What ails Sara is that she feels like a *murderess*, I guess!"

Sara, the murderess, had been weeping hours unconsoled and inconsolable!

"She thinks it all happened because Father threw away her lucky stone," Robert continued. "And she blames my Attic Fairy."

Alice started up the stairs again, but Laurie stopped her.

"Sara's gone out, though it's dusk already," she said; "nor could I nor any one have stopped her. With the tears streaming down her face she's gone out, and looking determined; so I hadn't a word to say to her."

"She's gone for her lucky stone," said Robert.

"Maybe she's gone to Mrs. Painter's," Grandma suggested.

Robert was sent on the search.

"She isn't in the yard," he reported, and a few moments later, "She's not at Mrs. Painter's. I looked through the window, and Mrs. Painter was sitting just rocking and sewing all by herself."

Visions of what might have happened to Sara in this

moment of her determination and her despair came to Alice.

"There's nothing to do but to go and look everywhere," she said to her Mother-in-law.

CHAPTER LIII

THEY started forth, Alice with an ever-growing sickness, for there is hardly anything worse for a mother than those black moments when for a while she does not know where her children are. She ran into Tom, and the calmness with which he took Sara's disappearance did not tranquilize her. One cannot reason with mothers about things like this: they would rather have the father of their children as panic-stricken as they are themselves.

At last, far off down the street, under an electric light, Alice saw the flutter of a white dress. It was accompanied by the ample outline of Grandma. Alice quickened her pace to a run, and Tom followed her with irritating requests for her to be calm, and still more irritating assertions that he had known all the time that Sara was all right.

Alice threw her arms about Sara and crushed her to her breast as though she had been lost for weeks.

"Where did you find her?" she asked her Mother-in-law.

"Where indeed?" said Grandma. "Where but in my own house, and doing what? Some instinct told me, Alice, that I should find that child at my house. I can't tell you why. And I came there just in time to find her *burning up my new switch* which, it seems, she had learned about when she was snooping around acquiring those three gray hairs she burned. Of course, you can't punish her to-day."

Sara was no longer crying. Her eyes were swollen

and her face was mottled, but serenity shone from her.

"I burned it so my fairies would bring back that bird to life!" she asserted calmly.

She looked up trustingly at her mother and father. Surely they would understand that the sacrifice of a mere switch was nothing compared to a bird's life! Surely they would understand that if burning three gray hairs was so potent a magic, burning a whole switch must be far better! But whether they understood or not, whether punishment followed or not, she, Sara, felt that she had done her duty.

She had them all at a disadvantage. She had, in the first place, the weapon of perfect faith. Moreover, she had about her the radiant consciousness of one who has performed a noble act. So this high moment was not the time for a talk on either the morals of burning one's Grandmother's new switch, or the laws of nature. She stood there a white, straight little figure—the figure of one who has had a moment of insight, of high resolve, and the courage to carry through her resolve.

The three older people were silent, Grandma bursting to speak, but restraining herself in the face of Sara's recent bereavement. Her mother for a moment had caught a glimpse deep into the heart of her little girl and into her tangled mind, and wondered what would happen to this blind faith when even this act of courage had not brought the bird back to life.

They passed by Mrs. Painter's. That kind and voluminous lady was proceeding leisurely down her flower-bordered path.

"Oh, I'm glad that's you!" she cried cheerily. "I was just going to your house, Mrs. Marcey. I've been worried about Sara all the afternoon. When she went home crying I called after her that Teeny was all right, but I was afraid she didn't hear."

She opened her hand, and in it nestled the canary.

Chronology had no meaning for Sara. She jumped up and down and clapped her hands.

"You see, I brang it back! You see, I brang it back!"

"Mrs. Painter," said Grandma, and her tone was not without bitterness, "it was you, I think, who suggested burning gray hairs?"

"Oh, I've burned bunches of 'em!" cried Sara.

"It was my switch she burned," Grandma announced in a voice which held dry disapproval. "She burned it to bring your bird to life."

Mrs. Painter indecorously leaned against one of the trees which flanked the entrance of her yard and laughed. She laughed until she shook through her whole vast person.

"Oh, dear, dear, dear!" she cried. "What will that child do next?"

The sense of injury which had been suppressed in Mrs. Marcey's breast here burst forth.

"Allow me to say," she enunciated, "that I think this filling of children's heads with nonsense can sometimes pass the limit, and had it been your switch you might have seen less humor in this. I'm not going to darken your doors again, Alice, as long as this nonsense is permitted to go on. I don't relish children who talk about no other thing than witches and specters, banshees, norns, and elephant-faced monstrosities. If you think it's nice for a little girl of Sara's age to claim to possess Moloch and Juggernaut—well, Alice, I don't. To my certain knowledge some of Robert's gods were not only bloodthirsty but worse."

A private house was no fit abode for the gods of antiquity, Alice reflected. They should stay in their temple or museums.

"They shall all go," Tom announced firmly. "From now on there are no fairies of any nature or description allowed in this house. And all the gods have got to go!"

He looked belligerently at his son. Robert was also one who could rise to an occasion.

"I was getting sick of the old things anyway," he said. He sidled up to Sara. "While they were looking for you I looked for your lucky stone and found it," he said in the ungracious tone employed by small boys when doing kind acts.

Sara took her stone and clutched it to her bosom. It evidently fulfilled her heart's desire.

"I don't care about 'em," said Sara. "I can have mine outside, and Robert's was always getting more powerful than mine. I don't want 'em, and besides, Mother, I know why he's sick of 'em. *Uncle Zotsby don't like 'em!*"

"And, Mother," said Robert censoriously, "now that they've all gone, I think Sara ought to have science explained to her. She ought to be told that burning up a switch or anything else won't bring anything to life."

Alice looked at Sara. She thought of the abandon of her grief and of her heroic desperation. It was no time for an anti-climax.

"I'll do that some other time," she told Robert.

That night she went up to Sara's room to see if she slept peacefully after her eventful day. She sat down on the edge of the bed, and sat on something hard.

It was the lucky stone. Alice sighed. She knew that the fairies might be gone and the gods banished, but now for weeks and weeks, wherever Sara went, this large cobblestone would go. One would be forever stubbing one's toe upon it, or sitting down on it in chairs where

it had been temporarily left. It had come to stay, brought over from the other side to be part of things forever more, as inescapable as Evelyn Dearie or Uncle Zotsby and his nameless dog.

CHAPTER LIV

AFTER all that had happened was it any wonder that what Alice wanted was a peaceful day, though if one pinned her down to it she would have had to confess that her notions of peace were very high? In fact they were so high it meant that for one whole day the children should cease disturbing her. If she could not get away on a visit, at least she wanted to be free from the sudden reprisal between Sara and Robert, no loud voiced squawkings from Sara for, when all was said and done, charming as Sara was, charming enough indeed to make her spend her life—or most of it—in trying to please, Sara was an awful squawker, so much so that it was one of those things that made both parents wonder secretly “where she got it from.”

A peaceful day meant freedom from squawking, from insistently monotonous and nerve racking noises. Which meant somehow or other you must be out of earshot of Jamie’s eternal tom-tomings, and the raids of Sara on Robert, and Robert on Sara, and Jamie on Sara, and so on throughout the six possible combinations. This all somehow or other had to be avoided.

This idea of a peaceful day had been as impossible as Alice’s vacation. But now the time had come when she absolutely had to have one, because she had to write a paper for the Club on “Woman in Civic Life To-day,” and to write a paper on this topic required freedom from interruption. It required freedom from all those casual runnings in and out of the children, freedom from the various—“Mother, where is——?” “Mother, may

I get——?" "Mother, I want——" "Mother, will you read——?"

Indeed, after three or four days of trying, Alice felt that these little runnings in and out, instead of being as joyful as a bubbling brook through the dusty spaces of life, were like the painful peckings of innocent, harmless birds on some raw spot. She felt her patience and her nerves and all her inner quiet being remorselessly pecked away from her by each successive innocent query.

After several fruitless days she realized what the matter was—she had not taken her children into her confidence, but had imposed upon them from without an arbitrary command which they did not understand. She could not, of course, expect to change their method of life without knowing exactly why.

After breakfast then Alice took them into her confidence. It was a rather bothersome and difficult task.

"Darlings," she told them, "do you want to help mother about something?"

It was easy to see the darlings did.

"Well, Mother has got to write a paper. Will you help her?"

Indeed they would! They would be only too delighted to help Mother at any time and any hour.

There was sometimes nothing so sweet in life as Sara's helpfulness, and again there was nothing that could be so irritating. Some days one had to confess that Sara was so helpful that the archangels themselves would have to suppress regret that the old time ear-boxings were no longer in vogue.

"Well," went on Alice, "the way you can help Mother is by being perfectly still."

"Just being still?" said Sara in her shrillest staccato. "Just sitting? Sitting still will help you?"

Alice replied that just sitting still would help her immensely.

"What's the paper about?" Robert wanted to know.

Alice told him.

"What's that?" he inquired. The morning was flying, but Alice took him into her confidence some more. When she had finished, his disappointing comment was merely, "Shucks!"

To this Alice replied, "Well, Robert, shucks or not, it interests me. I want to write this paper, and I can't write it unless you children stop interrupting me every five minutes. Just don't come near my room—that's all. And, Sara, don't take Jamie's things away from him. And, Robert, don't tease Sara."

Alice realized the moral tone of the interview had lowered perceptibly, and that she was speaking with a decided briskness.

Jamie was gently beating a tattoo upon the floor; the whole thing floated over his placid head. He was intent on his own imaginings. He had understood only one thing, and that was that Sara was not to take away his things as was her custom.

CHAPTER LV

ALICE went to work. Quiet, not too tense to be disturbing, reigned below. This was the way it should have been done in the first place, Alice reflected, writing busily.

Suddenly her mind was diverted by a little noise—such an ambiguous noise that it had the effect on her nerves of being more disturbing than thunder. This rustle continued, hesitated, continued again. When you analyzed it, it was only the squeaking of a board or a faint rustle that you could hardly call a footfall, but it cried in the loudest tones to Alice, “This means you!”

The noise halted, and then its cause came into view. It was Sara, who, with the greatest consideration in the world, had spent five nerve-racking minutes in her progress down the hall to Alice’s room. She walked to her mother in the same careful way. She might have been walking over the thinnest of ice, she might have been walking on the tips of her toes across egg shells, so deliberate was she and so careful not to disturb her dear mother.

Finally she arrived before Alice. Her eyes were swimming with affection, her lips with cruel inaudibility formed the words:

“Sweet Mother!”

Her soul was a pool of sunshine, reflecting on its surface only love. In this heavenly pool Alice flung the rough stone of an irritable:

“Well, Sara?”

Doubt was now reflected in the pool. Sara looked at

her mother's face and saw there only a suppressed irritation. Her smile wilted.

"Well, Sara, what is it?" said Alice, calmly, still showing no pleasure at the sight of her daughter. "Why did you interrupt me?"

"I didn't mean to interrupt," quavered Sara, "I only came to tell you—I love you!" The sentence ended in the whisper of a little sob. She bowed her head, and as slowly as any funeral procession, and as sadly, started for the door.

Sara with head down and heartbroken was a spectacle no human mother could have witnessed unmoved. Alice called her back—they were in each other's arms. It was an emotional and disturbing moment.

Again she took Sara into her confidence. Again Sara went away. Again Alice applied herself to writing.

From below came the noise of conflict. Alice dashed down the stairs. Sara pointed a tragic finger at Robert.

"He threw a book at me," she announced.

"It didn't hit you," said Robert.

"It hit me in the feelings," said Sara, "and hurt 'em awful! It hurts feelings to have books thrown at 'em, Robert Marcey! Yes, and why did he throw a book at me, Mother? Because I tried to kiss him—that's all! Just because I tried to kiss him, he throws books at me!" Here Sara's wrongs overwhelmed her, and she wept.

"And why—why do I have to throw books?" Robert planted himself before his mother. "I told her I didn't want to be kissed. I told her to leave me alone. I told her I wanted to read. She came in and kissed me, and I told her not to. She came in and kissed me a third time, and I told her I'd throw a book at her if she kissed me again, and she came right on top of that and kissed me some more. So I threw the book. I could have hit her, if I'd wanted to, but I just threw it to warn her.

Next time, though, I'll hit her. I was being quiet, wasn't I? Why can't she let me be?"

Why, indeed? Why women can't let man be has been one of the questions that neither sage nor philosopher has ever solved.

It was here that Alice wearily again took her children into her confidence, and went back to work.

Again she heard the little rustle. Again it floated to her room. At her door it paused. By the reflection in a mirror Alice could see Sara had seated herself just at the threshold, seated herself with love and smiling patience. By straining her ears—for what Sara was saying was just below the point where one could comfortably hear it, but loud enough to make all writing impossible—Alice could hear Sara saying to herself:

"I won't disturb my darling mother. I won't go into her room and tell her how I love her. I'll let her write. I'll help my mother, my sweet, darling mother."

At this moment a lively rough-house broke out between the two boys down-stairs. One could hear Jamie's clear treble laughing happily. One could hear Robert thump-thumping around with the slap-stick humor irresistible to babies of Jamie's age. It was a lovely sound if one were not doing anything, but a noise impossible to enjoy if one were trying to write. In a pause Sara whispered virtuously:

"I don't disturb my sweet mother like the boys!"

Alice was through for the day. She was also through taking her children into her confidence. She knew, moreover, that Sara being naughty might perhaps be reckoned with, but that Sara striving to please was more implacable than the Judgment Day.

CHAPTER LVI

ALICE had always felt that if it had not been for the rain, the devil could never have got close enough to tempt her; but the insistent pattering of three days' rain brought it into Alice's mind that time was flying, and in consequence of this Something had to be Done.

That something presented itself in a more and more definite form all the time. The thing that the devil tempted Alice Marcey to do was to corrupt her children's minds by bribing them. More subtly vicious than authoritarianism, rewards and punishment for conduct seemed to the enlightened parents of the young Marceys. Alice had sometimes trifled with this temptation before. It would be a heart of stone that would not give an unexpected reward sometimes, but she tried to make it clear to their minds that these things were not bribes for goodness. All modern parents know that nothing constructive is happening in a young brain which is merely doing a certain sort of work or following a certain line of conduct because the child is going to be paid for it or punished for it. Children should learn their lessons of life from deeper and higher motives than those of gain or pain.

As the days dripped themselves lugubriously to an end Alice felt that peace had to be attained, even if it were attained by so nefarious a means as bribery and corruption. Peace she must have.

She realized gloomily how much more popular a measure bribery was than the sacred rite of taking the children into her confidence. That measure had not only

been ineffective but had left them lukewarm. The idea of a box of candy—Alice went to that length—to whichever of the two older children kept the stillest, with a special extra bribe to Jamie to stop making what Alice in her moments of enlightenment called his “experiments in Rhythm” and in her moments of darkness called “that unbearable racket,” made an instant atmosphere of cheer in the house. She explained to them again in words of one syllable what she wanted. She shamelessly described the box of candy in the most mouth-watering fashion, and returned to her writing.

This scheme might have worked perfectly, but it didn't. The only reason that it didn't was that it just happened not to. And it happened not to right under Alice's window.

It was one of Sara's squawks that sent Alice to the window. Sara was on the ground. Robert was saying:

“There, now you've disturbed Mother! Now *I* get the candy!”

To the horrors of bribery had been added the indecency of competition.

“You don't get it! It's your fault that I made a noise. You stuck your foot out sideways and tripped me. If he sticks a foot out and I fall and hit my funny bone and cry, it's Robert that's made the first noise, isn't it, Mother?”

“I just didn't think. I didn't mean to trip you up.”

“He's got tripping feet; he trips me all the time.”

“My foot just went out of itself. I didn't put it. I didn't make any noise.”

“Neither of you gets the candy,” cried their exasperated mother. “Both of you go right in the house and *reflect!*”

“Am I going to reflect too?” asked Sara. There were both interest and curiosity in her tone.

"That's not fair," Robert insisted. "It just did it itself. Sara made the noise," he repeated with obstinacy. "No matter how long you make me reflect, Mother, that's all I'll reflect on."

Reflection had often brought light to Robert's mind. His was a logical and reasonable mind, and in moments of stress Alice had asked him to sit quietly—oh, no, this was not a punishment!—and think over the events that had occurred and reflect as to his share in them. She had not tried reflection on Sara heretofore. Somehow, Sara did not seem to have arrived at the age of reflection, although reflection seemed specially adapted to Robert's temperament from a very early age.

When Alice got down-stairs Sara was already seated in a chair which she had turned toward the wall, in an attitude of deep thought. Alice explained to her the theme for reflecting. She had a talk with reasonable Robert, and asked him to consider that they both had forfeited their right to candy.

When Alice got back to her room all thoughts she had had on Woman and Civics were wilted like up-rooted plants which have lain in the sun. She, also, gave herself up to reflection.

From down-stairs came Sara's cheerful little chirp.

"Mother," it went. "Mother, may I stop reflecting? I've got it all finished."

Alice looked at her watch. Reflection was never prolonged to the line of punishment.

"Why, yes," she called back, "you can stop now. Come and tell Mother what you've reflected."

"I've 'flected," said Sara, beaming; "I 'flected everything. I 'flected that Robert is good and"—here her voice sailed up in a note of triumph—"that we each ought to have some candy because nobody meant anything."

Alice didn't answer. In her, humor, as well as her thoughts, was dead. Sara looked sympathetically at her mother.

"Are you 'flecting too?" she inquired tenderly.

Alice was. She was reflecting how the mother of three children can come by a Peaceful Day.

She could not see any way out. That she had come to the end of her string, was what reflection had told her, so that evening she put it up to Tom. He rested a contemplative and somewhat menacing eye upon the children.

"If you want peace," he said, "any time after twelve to-morrow you can have it, and all Sunday too. I'll look after them!"

CHAPTER LVII

AS Alice went to work sounds came to her ears that left her no doubt that Tom had reverted to type. From being a modern and enlightened parent he had gone back to that which Alice often thought he was meant to be, by temperament, that is, the old-fashioned and dictatorial type of parent. Tom was a simple-minded and uncompromising sort of man from whose lips the simple orders "Do" and "Don't" fell more easily than the careful setting to work of forces which later might help his children's character. Temperamentally he wanted results, and wanted them right away, as evidenced by the tone of voice in which he was saying:

"Now, you kids, Sara and Robert, listen to me. I'm here, and there isn't going to be a sound in this house this afternoon. You hear me?"

At this statement Alice smiled. Her heart was lightened. She felt there were more unworthy parents than herself. If Tom's only solution was the eternal and unfruitful negative, the antiquated "Thou shalt not," then her experiment in bribery—tried, after everything else had failed—did not convict her of being the only peccable parent in that household.

Presently from below came a bellow which would have done credit to the Bull of Bashan.

"Stop that!" said the Voice.

Alice jumped. She had heard nothing down-stairs besides the ordinary runnings to and fro, the chirp of a pleasant voice.

There was silence, the disheartening silence in which

one might imagine discouraged children roaming about in preternatural quiet. Then presently into the silence broke the Awful Voice.

"I-told-you-I-didn't-even-want-to-hear-you, not one of you!"

It was a terrible voice, the voice of the outraged Superman who has witnessed the weaklings disobey his dread command.

Again the Voice; this time not raised in commanding anger, but offended and dignified.

"Don't be foolish," said the Voice. "Of course you can move. But"—here it rose grave and menacing like a slowly rising tempest—"if I hear any noise!"

Again the Silence. Again the Voice, this time blaring out the menace of a trumpeting elephant.

"Be still!"

Silence of the grave. Into this silence came Sara's little piping treble. Alice's strained ears could not hear what it said, but she could infer by the trumpeting answer:

"Because I say so!"

Alice's first thought was, brave little Sara, to dare to face the formidable creature who was doubtless glommering at her. Then into Alice's mind shot a thought unendurable, a maddening thought, and that thought was, "*He likes to do this. He's enjoying his authority.*"

Alice had long been a suffragist; it was at this moment she became a feminist. Those potent words, "a Man-Made World," she had passed over almost with flippancy. Now she realized what women and children had had to bear all these years; now she realized what at rock bottom was the character of her husband, Tom Marcey. Brutal authoritarianism, enjoyment of just sheer force—was what it was!

And as the Voice came up again, grave with its own self-importance, menacing with all the weight of his superior physical strength behind it,

"He's wallowing in it," thought Alice in anger, "just wallowing in the bullying of women and little children." At this moment she felt herself one with her offspring. "Nothing but an accident in time has kept him from bullying me." Her fists clenched themselves involuntarily at this thought. "Let us both have been born a few years ago and he would have bullied me, and I—— What could I have done? I'd have done *anything* to prevent my ears being split by noises like that."

She listened to him in amazement—she listened to him with wrath, with indignation, with ever-growing rebellion. That was what all his fine phrases about modern means of education and the responsibility of parenthood amounted to! Just give him a chance, and that's what he was really like, and that's what he would be like to his wife. At that moment Tom Marcey was not far removed from a wife-beater in Alice's eyes. She reflected that if her parents had ever spoken to her like that, just once—just once—she could never have had the same feeling toward them again. Even now the thought of the superior tone her father used when she was supposed to have been naughty, enraged her.

"Poor things!" she thought. "We're making them do all of a sudden, from one moment to another, what the poor suffocated little children of past ages were taught to do from their cradles—adapt themselves entirely to grown-up ways. And this ghastly, awful day there's Tom enjoying himself, having a perfectly beautiful time suppressing and bullying his own flesh and blood."

Two paragraphs ornamented Alice's paper. The ink

was drying in her pen. She sat, listening to the drama that was going on down-stairs—the tiny, tiny, piteous little noises that seemed no bigger than those of a mouse, followed by awful explosions.

“You—you Juggernaut!” thought Alice.

The Voice was heard again, and after the Voice there arose to Alice’s ears a sound that made her spring to her feet. It was Robert crying—and Robert never cried for nothing, he never had from babyhood.

“If you’re going to be a cry-baby,” said the Voice, and then she heard footsteps and the sound of Robert’s suppressed weeping growing fainter.

“What,” she thought, “is he going to do with him?”

Perhaps he was going to spank him—and Robert was far beyond the spankable age. It was too much. Alice dashed down the stairs. She intended to see it through. To Woman and Civics she had not given a thought. She was sitting up there finding out what men-were-like-when-they-had-the-chance-to-be.

She came down to find Jamie awestruck, round-mouthed, sitting perfectly quiet. Sara, too, was sitting, quiet, on the opposite side of the room. At sight of her mother she jumped up and whispered to her loudly:

“Robert’s scared of him! Jamie’s scared of him! But I’m not scared of him. He makes me laugh. Not outside—oh, no, not outside,” Sara hastened to assure her mother, “but inside I laugh, and I make believe he’s a *nogre!*”

At this speech Alice looked at her daughter with comprehension. Insight into the nature of man came to her. Thus it was that Woman from all time had met the senseless and unimportant roarings of Man—with a smile inside. Sara, whose name, Alice reflected, should have been Eve, was taking her father with that immemorial indulgence that women have shown men since

time began. He could impose on his sons, but to his daughter he was "sweet father," and no amount of bug-a-boo words could make her believe anything else. If she had to sit still, she could pleasantly while away the time by pretending he was a "nobre."

These thoughts flashed through Alice's mind as Tom returned. He swung along with the stride of a man who has accomplished much.

"Just taken Robert away where you can't hear him making a baby of himself," he announced, "but they have not peeped. This house has been quiet as a church!" He looked at her with eyes full of smiles. "Any time you want a quiet afternoon just call on me, and I'll keep 'em quiet."

He was all good nature, beaming over his work well accomplished. The deep simplicity of man touched Alice to her heart. She kissed Tom tenderly and thanked him for his contribution to her peace.

CHAPTER LVIII

THIS was all very well, but the paper was not written, and, what was more, it had to be. With awful inevitableness the day when it must be finished was approaching.

"What ails me?" thought Alice. "Are my nerves so frail that I can't do this thing unless I live in a vacuum?"

Now she had a new plan. A word dropped by Tom gave it to her.

"Telling them to, is no way to keep children quiet," he said; "if I had a few minutes more time I would have got them something they really wanted to do. But, of course, as you wanted to finish writing right away, I just had to sit on the lid."

Alice inquired separately of each one of her children what they would rather do than anything else in the world.

What Robert wanted to do was simple. There was nothing the matter with it except that it was not a thing that Alice had ever allowed, and that in allowing it once she would have permitted that thing feared so by her mother-in-law, the Entering Wedge. She knew that by permitting it she was bringing on her head arguments without limit, "Whys" without number to be answered. What Robert wanted to do was to go to the movies alone. Alice did not approve of the afternoon movies with all the children in town cooped up in an inflammable, germ-laden, unventilated Black Hole of Calcutta, as she de-

scribed the local show. But it definitely and completely disposed of Robert for that afternoon.

"If I let you play with anything you wanted to," Alice then asked Sara, "what would you play with in this house?"

"Anything?"

"Anything," said Alice firmly.

"Fire and matches?" asked Sara.

"No," Alice had to confess, "not fire and matches."

"Climbing on the roof with a ladder, like you made Robert reflect for?" asked Sara.

"No," again Alice had to confess, "nothing that can hurt you."

"Would paddling in the bathtub hurt me?" inquired Sara with artful cunning.

Alice had to admit that that occupation was not lethal.

"Sailing paper boats and paper boats and paper boats in the bathtub all the afternoon, and sailing the soap dish and sailing the tooth glass, and washing dolls' clothes, and putting the rubber animals in and the bath animals in," asked Sara, "and everything in, like a 'quarium? I could do that if I wanted?"

"Yes," said Alice faintly.

She saw a desolate waste of splashed up house. She saw chaos and confusion indescribable. She foresaw, also, that Jamie would want to play this game, and she had made one condition in doing just what you wanted, which was that each child must play alone. The bright vision of a peaceful afternoon was fast dimming itself when, after a moment's reflection, Sara broke forth with—

"Well, I don't want to do it. Because," she explained, "I want to do something else more. Do you know what I want to do? I want to dress up. I want to be a lady. I want to put a little shawl over my



shoulders and walk up and down the front lawn with my Japan paper parasol. I want to walk up and down—like this.”

With dignity and elegance Sara started up and down the hall, her imaginary sunshade held over her head, her hand clasping imaginary skirts so they should not trail behind her in unseemly confusion.

“I want to do that all the afternoon. I’ll dress up in this and then I’ll dress up in that.” She indicated garments of her mother’s.

“You’ll want to come and show me,” said Alice suspiciously.

“Oh, no, I won’t,” said Sara, “I’ll walk up and down where everybody will see me.”

As for Jamie, he was equally definite, as Alice had known he would be, for, undiverted by the thought of the bathtub, she saw the garden hose would be his objective point.

Oh, lovely and forbidden garden hose! For how many punishings are you not responsible?

More surely than the snake in the Garden of Eden, the serpentlike garden hose has forever lured the feet of the children of men from the path of obedience.

So, with Robert at the “pictures” and Sara ministering to her vanity with selected clothes of Alice’s, and Jamie at the hose, Alice repaired to her delayed paper. She wrote along serenely, tranquilly, wrote along swimmingly, her mind’s eye picturing to her the vain Sara peacocking up and down the lawn, the grave Jamie holding the hose proudly, running and turning it off and running and turning it on, and getting sopping.

Late in the afternoon there was but one paragraph to finish when she heard her children’s voices and, rising above them in firm remonstrance, the voice of their grandmother.

"I cannot believe your mother let you do anything of the kind," she was saying.

In Sara's hand was a soaked and shredded umbrella. Alice's silk scarf was dripping. Round Sara's legs was wound a green chiffon length, also part of her spoils. This, too, was soaking, and the color had come off upon her clothes.

"I found Sara lying in the yard," said Tom's mother grimly, "dressed up as you see her, Alice, with an umbrella in one hand and a comb in the other, and Jamie turning the hose on her."

"We didn't play together, Mother," Sara proclaimed; "I just spoke to him once. I told him to turn the hose on me so I could be a mermaid. . . . She said, Grandma, I might dress up like anything I wanted, and if I couldn't get wet how could I be a mermaid?"

"I suppose nothing will happen to them for this," said the grandmother, her voice rising, "but at least, Alice, you might tell me how it was they happened to be doing what they were."

Alice explained to her. She explained about her need for a peaceful day and about her paper.

"Woman and Civics," her mother snorted. "I can tell you, Alice Marcey, when I was young we had more practical civics than you seem to know in this generation. If a woman had wanted a peaceful afternoon, I'll warrant she wouldn't have had to be at any such tricks to get it. In sickness and health, there are times when you need your neighbors, times when children have got to be got rid of. We could nurse our neighbors through their sicknesses and we were not above asking a friend to take care of a couple of children for a few hours. But you don't send a child anywhere unless he's invited, and the more you need your neighbors the less you use them. Why didn't you send the children to me, for goodness' sake?"

CHAPTER LIX

AFTER her peaceful day Alice faced the fact that trouble started oftener with Tom than with her. These thoughts she told to no one, neither did she consider them disloyal. She wondered about them.

She wondered about it the more because Tom on his part had two very different views about her.

In one, Alice saw herself as a feckless, supine thing, incapable of order, who, with open eyes, pusillanimously permitted herself to be bamboozled by her entire household for the sake of a shameful peace. This idea Tom often voiced loudly.

His other idea about her he let out without meaning to. Alice, it seemed, was the one who stirred up discord. If Alice went away, the household ran with exemplary smoothness. With Tom in command, the children at once became responsible and obedient. Laurie forgot her habits of disorder; once under the hands of a master she became systematic, patient and given to scrubbing the bottoms of pots and pans without being told. But let Alice come back again and it was all up, because Alice spoiled them all and stirred things up so.

"When we are more civilized," Alice told Tom's mother, "a woman and her children will form the home, the center of things, and the husband will live outside, and come and visit and behave himself, and then things will be less complicated."

To this Mrs. Marcey, instead of being shocked at Alice's flights of imagination, replied:

"I have always said that something will have to be

done about Men; and yet we all know, while they upset every household in which they set a foot, we can't get on without them!"

Yet there were times enough when Alice wished one could. For the more Tom mixed himself up in the government of the family the worse things got. Though, of course, it was a challenge to Tom to mix himself when Robert pushed back his plate at the dinner table and proclaimed:

"I hate boiled beef!"

It marked a crisis in the life of the Marceys. Tom arose from his chair and slammed his napkin upon it and burst out:

"There is one thing I will not stand—there is one torture I will not endure"—his language was Biblical—"and that is these children commenting upon the food set before them. I am so familiar with the fact that Sara hates tapioca that the sight of it makes me shudder, much as I like it myself. I have got to the point, Alice, where your struggles with Jamie over soup are a thing that gets on my nerves. And when for a week on end—a *week on end mark you*—I hear Robert saying, 'I won't eat this,' I have reached the limit! There is nothing wrong with the food. Therefore, there must be something wrong with the children!" Alice expected him to leave the room at this point, but he paused at the door to say, "Sometimes they eat everything in sight, and you can't stop 'em eating; they gulp their food like young cormorants, which is just as bad, I think, and I am tired of it."

He had placed the responsibility of everything on Alice's shoulders. From his tone one might have gathered that he had no part or parcel in these children, anyway; that they were *her* children, and that by some sleight of hand, he had got rid of his parenthood—and

as for responsibility for this State of Things! Well, that was the fault of Alice and the food. And what Tom Marcey wanted was the State of Things altered, and that right away.

"If you think it is a pleasant thing," he went on, "to see Sara eat one grain of rice like Amina with an expression of endurance upon her face, if you think it pleases me to see Robert, at his age—at *his age*—gnawing chops like a prehistoric cave man——"

Here Alice showed spirit. She said, "Well, then, why don't you change it? Why don't you make them eat the way they ought to eat?"

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I will! You bet I will! What do we talk about at table?" he demanded, coming back to his first manner, "but what the children are eating or not eating? Have we any other topic of conversation? Do we ever, when we are alone, speak of anything else except what they do or do not eat, and how bad their table manners are? I don't believe that there's another household like this in the whole United States."

So saying, he went away hastily.

Silence brooded over the desolated Marcey dinner table, a silence that Sara finally broke.

"I know why Papa's so mad," she chirped; "I know what Papa wouldn't stand, Robert Marcey. It's because you eat chop bones, yes, and chicken bones, too, when he isn't looking, with your fingers."

To this Robert replied with gloom.

"Yes, and what do you eat yours with—your toes?"

This struck Sara funny. Amid gurglings and chirpings, she said:

"Mother, could one eat bones with one's toes, if one tried?"

Robert made a shrug toward his mother, a shrug which

said, "You see, I told you, she's defective. Her mind isn't what it ought to be."

During this scene Jamie had not been idle. He had ignored his plate of wholesome food, and he had had time to make an entire meal of nuts and raisins, set, apparently, out of his reach. By what prestidigitation he had come by them, Alice could not find out. The point was that he irrevocably had them. He now contributed, with a smile of angelic sweetness:

"I love raisins and nuts!"

Rage broke out in Robert's heart. "Look at him! Look at him!" he cried. "He's eaten every one of them! He's eaten every one! And you said if we ate our food properly, an' all of it—and *all of it*—we could have seven nuts and seven raisins apiece!"

Sara screamed: "Look at him, Mother! He didn't eat anything before Father left, an' he didn't eat a thing after Father left, and now he's eaten every single nut and every single raisin except some eenty-weenty ones. He's a bad boy!"

To which Jamie replied, simply, "I'm finished."

He slipped down from his chair and left the table.

Here they all acted as though the meal were finished, but Alice was made of sterner stuff.

"No child shall leave this table," she proclaimed, "until he has eaten all the meat and the macaroni upon his plate."

Sara the practical inquired, "And do we get our nuts and raisins just the same?"

"Where from, you idiot?" gloomed Robert.

"Where the others came from," Sara returned, as one who spoke of a land flowing with nuts and raisins.

For once her mother agreed with her. "Certainly, where the others came from," she said. "You shall have them."

They ate silently and slowly, but on Robert's part with gloom. Sara, whose more volatile spirits were upheld by the thought of the nuts and raisins, ate with greater cheer. Alice sat back in her chair, discouraged. It had not been a pleasant meal—except for Jamie. Tom, too, had had some fun.

CHAPTER LX

THERE was a long silence, then Alice said:

"I wish I knew what ails you children. I wish I knew why you won't eat your meals like other children." To this Robert growled:

"I'll tell you. It's because we never have anything fit to eat."

"Yes," contributed Sara, "it's because we never have anything to eat except horrid soup an' meat an' vegetables."

"I hate meat!" Robert now grumbled.

"An' I hate vegetables, *every kind!*" said Sara.

"You don't hate rice!" Robert told her belligerently.

"Rice ain't vegetables," was Sara's contribution to botany.

From sheer weariness Alice had let this go on. Now she gave out:

"Suppose you make out a list of the things you like to eat."

Just as she said this Tom passed the door, crying out, "When I was young, eating was considered a privilege, not a duty!"

"He had got things to eat he liked, most likely," said Sara, wagging her head sadly.

Spirit again returned to Alice. She now asserted:

"I am not telling you children to make out lists of what you want to eat just to indulge you, but I should like to know what you would like. You have what every one else has."

"Oh, no, we don't!" said Robert. "Over to Jimmy

Allen's I saw them have spare ribs and cabbage, and a stuffed calf's heart."

It was at this psychological point that their grandmother entered the room.

"What's all this how-de-do?" she inquired. "First, I meet Tom storming down the street like a tornado. Next I come in and see all of you acting as though you were lamenting the fall of Ilium. What ails you all?"

Their explanations were various.

"Pa got mad," was Sara's simple version.

"It's that I have to eat bum grub while Jamie swipes the nuts and raisins," Robert contributed, more fully.

"Well, it's a thing I have noticed," said their grandmother, "that none of your children eat enough to keep a grasshopper alive, unless you force it down with a force pump. What ails children nowadays, I don't know. When I was little we ate what was set before us and were glad to do it; and nowadays it is, 'I don't like this' and 'I don't want that,' and you newfangled parents stand it."

"I'd like to know what *you'd* do," Alice inquired bitterly.

"Not what you're doing," her mother-in-law responded briskly, "not be lying down and making a doormat of myself, anyway. I tell you, Alice, there have always been two kinds of children in the world—and heaven knows which is the worse—the kind that will eat everything and the kind that won't eat anything. And the kind that eat everything, will eat; you can't stop them eating and they are never satisfied, though they ought to be. The kind that won't eat anything, *nothing* will make them eat—not in our day. But in the good old days both kinds ate a good plate of victuals set before them, and they ate it up and they ate it quick! And then both kinds went and hooked cookies out of the

cookie jar in between meals—for there never was a child born that wouldn't eat between meals if it could."

Alice thought of her problem during the entire afternoon. She might have saved her thought to some other purpose, because Tom returned early that evening with a solution.

"I know what we are going to do," he said. "I am tired of a nightmare three times a day. There are going to be *No More Meals!*"

This did not appeal to Alice's practical sense.

"What are you going to do?" she inquired.

"You and I are going to a restaurant," replied Tom; "these are all the meals that are going to be."

"You're going to let them starve?" Alice inquired.

"Leave them without food for a day or two," Tom pronounced, "and they'll come around all right. They'll see how foolish they have been, and then they'll all eat their meals in peace and quietness, and eat what is put before them. Of course I don't mean to deprive the children of all means of access to food. Three times a day bread and milk or breakfast food or something like that can be laid out on the table. If they want to eat that, let them. If not, let them let it alone. As for me, I am through! What I like is peace."

"I think," responded Alice, "that it's a ridiculous idea."

This response of hers was ill-timed. It led to conflict, and with Tom's voicing an unaltered resolve that the children were going to behave.

Meantime the idea of no more meals had seized on Sara's imagination. Leaning over the fence she told all who chose to listen what was going to happen. She told the Williamses next door. She told Gladys Grayson. She made a visit to Mrs. Painters to tell the news.

It was no wonder that her grandmother heard of it and hastened to her son's house.

"Of all things, Alice Marcey!" said she, as she plumped down in her chair. "Don't tell me it was your idea. I know *men*! What do you want your children to be? Scavengers?"

Up to this time, Alice had had no faith in Tom's scheme. Now she suddenly came to its defense.

"I think the children will love it."

"Love it! Of course they'll love it. Such a charming scheme! They'll be eating all over the place—ash-barrels, probably,—the neighbors', of course. Well, no one ever said of me that I let a child go hungry. Poor little things! They can come over to my house and get a square meal whenever they want. Why you, a sensible woman, are taken in by a lot of empty words from an angry man is a thing I cannot see. Let men talk; then do as you please!"

Having given the sum of old-fashioned wisdom in the treatment of husbands, Mrs. Marcey took her departure, her parasol at a militant angle above her head, holding her skirts an inch higher than necessity indicated.

Laurie later appeared before Alice, stern and accusing.

"Tell me once for all, Mis' Marcey. Is it true what I've been hearin' from the neighbors, that meals is goin' to stop in this house and the childer is goin' to have nothin' to eat?"

"Certainly not," responded Alice with dignity; "they are going to have cereal and bread and milk set before them three times a day. Their father seems to think they will eat better if we leave them like that for a little while."

"And yerself what is you going to do?" inquired Laurie with sarcasm.

"I suppose we'll go to a restaurant," Alice weakly admitted.

"Oho!" responded Laurie, who Tom had always maintained was indulged and petted too much, "Oho! You be goin' out and stuffin' yourselves with everything good in the land while the childer starves to home! Oho!"

"If you have anything further to say," said Alice with dignity, "you can make your remarks to Mr. Marcey. I think I hear him coming now."

And upon the appearance of Tom, Alice remarked: "Have you still made up your mind to make yourself a Laughing-Stock?" To which Tom Marcey answered:

"This house is going to be Put to Rights!"

CHAPTER LXI

AT first, gloom brooded over the small Marceys. Something portentous had happened. Jove was angry. Laurie bounced around the kitchen saying, "Poor lambs, I'll take care of them, myself." Their grandmother seemed to be kinder and more comprehending of childhood than one had ever known her to be. As for Alice, she made no sign. She went on a disturbingly even way. It was Robert who came to her to learn the precise details of the case.

"Are you going out to dinner to-night?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Alice.

"Are you going out to breakfast to-morrow?"

"I'm not sure," said Alice.

"And lunch, to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"And dinner to-morrow night?"

"And the next, and the next, and the next, and the next?" asked Sara.

"You shut up!" Robert commanded rudely. "Why are you going?" he asked.

"I'll tell you why," replied his mother, her voice cool as an iceberg. "It's because your father objects to the way that you and Sara and Jamie eat,—and do not eat,—at table. Your remarks spoil his pleasure. He is tired, and he is going out to take a rest."

Gloom spread over Robert. For one second it seemed as if it would work. It might have worked without Sara; but at that point Sara, the heartless, clapped her hands and cried aloud:

"Oh, goody! Now we can have a picnic every day—every time we have a meal, and we can have meals every time we want to!"

"How do you know?" asked Robert glumly.

Sara cocked her head on one side.

"I've been talking to Grandma, and, oh, lots of people. Do you like doughnuts and popcorn?"

It was these two words that took the last gleam of hope from the heart of Alice Marcey. Instinct had told her that her husband was wrong from the first—but what he had done was to get angry at the Domestic Situation—and that, far from giving in to him, she should have "humored" him, which means in polite language that, instead of treating your fellow man as an equal, you apparently agree with him with all alacrity, in the meanwhile working out for him his destiny yourself as seems best to you. Alice had been weak, and she knew it. What hurt her most was that Tom was fantastic, that this scheme of his could be called by no other name.

They started off that evening to a restaurant, Tom giving orders to the treacherously passive Laurie.

"Put out plenty of milk and zwieback for the children."

"Yes, sir!" replied Laurie. But Alice seemed to sniff other viands than those mentioned by her husband. Since she was standing by him, she intended to do so.

"What is that, Laurie?" she demanded.

"Oh, I was frying up a bit of somethin' for meself. There's quite a lot of leavings around, you know, Mis' Marcey."

Alice listened with aversion to her husband's cheery assurances, "This'll bring 'em around, you'll see, in a day or two." At that moment, men, and especially husbands, annoyed Alice Marcey. For one moment, her hand, not as adequate as it should have been, had left

the domestic tiller, and now see what was happening!

Usually when Alice and Tom had dined at a restaurant it had been a special sort of merrymaking. Tonight one could see with half an eye that Tom's mind was not here. He was wondering whether the children were eating their zwieback and milk. Alice, on the other hand, was wondering what they were eating, and what they were doing. They finished their meal with undue haste and returned home. All seemed as it should be. Jamie was looking at a picture book. Sara was playing with paper dolls, and Robert was studying his lessons. It might have been Alice's overwrought imagination that made her hear Laurie's voice saying:

"Whist! my darlin's, not a word!"

"Are my darlings all right?" Alice asked.

To this Robert replied, "All right, I guess."

And Sara chirped, "Grandma was in. Yes, and Mrs. Painter came, too."

"Mrs. Painter," asked Tom. "What did *she* come for?"

"Oh, she just came!" Sara brightly gave out. "And Mrs. Phinney came to see Laurie, too."

During this time Alice noticed that Robert was trying to check Sara's artless flow of talk.

"Who is Mrs. Phinney?" inquired Tom Marcey.

"She's just a friend of Laurie's." Sara could hold in no longer.

"Say, Father," she cried from the depths of her generous heart, "say, don't you want a piece of molasses candy and a popcorn ball? Mrs. Phinney, she makes the grandest kind!"

I think any wife would have agreed that Mr. Marcey lost his temper with needless violence at this kind remark of Sara's. He fixed his wife with an awful eye.

"It is not for this! It is not to have their stomachs

filled full of trash by meddling neighbors, that we are going out of our comfortable home to a restaurant, and you ought to see that things like this don't happen!"

To this Alice might have responded that, having been out of the house, she could not help it.

He called Sara and Robert before him.

"Do you hear what I say? Not a single thing between meals are you to eat!"

A swift look of intelligence passed between the two children. It was as sharp as summer lightning, few mothers living would have let it pass unchallenged; but Alice was tired of the whole affair. She had been put in a ridiculous situation, so she formed an alliance with her children against her husband. She formed it by saying nothing and letting that look of swift intelligence pass by unheeded. It was all over in the twinkling of an eye. The children were silent just long enough for Tom Marcey to reiterate, "Do you understand me?"

To which Robert replied, "Yes, sir!"

And Sara, in the most dulcet of tones, "Yes, Father!"

Here Laurie came in.

"I wish you'd step here," she said firmly. "Jamie doesn't look right to me. Jamie's sick."

Tom glanced at Jamie and telephoned for the doctor.

"What," he asked Alice, "do you suppose is the matter with that child? Do you suppose just because we've turned our backs a minute, that he's been eating trash? Can't we go to a restaurant without every idiot in the world filling that child full?"

Here Alice lost patience.

"The trouble is you, Tom Marcey!" she cried. "You with your ridiculous 'No more meals!' You didn't mean it! All you wanted was to get away!"

He checked the torrent of her anger.

"That's what you need," he said pacifically. "That's

what you need. Things are getting on your nerves. You need to get away."

So kind was his tone that Alice did not reply, but she realized now she could never get away; that she could never leave her helpless children at the mercy of a man, unreasonable enough to formulate the words "No more meals," even though he didn't mean them.

CHAPTER LXII

IT was things like this that made Alice ask herself with ever greater frequency, "Why do husbands complicate life so?" There was also a heresy that tormented her. It was, "Do children bring husbands and wives closer together?" Certainly the question of the chickens did not. Why did Tom think that chickens would suddenly make Robert responsible?

It is the theory held by all mothers that the care of animals is a developing thing for children, but every practical mother knows that even the most well-beloved animals will have to be fed by older people half the time. There is not a mother in her senses who believes that one can give a child a garden, or even a kitten, and not have to help along with interest and attention; and there is scarcely a father in the world who does not believe that by the giving of a plot of ground or a brood of chickens, responsibility will magically blossom, without any cultivating on his part.

Ever since there had been chickens enough so that Sara and Robert had to walk with a preserving kettle, to get table scraps for them at a neighbor's, life, it seemed to Alice, had been one long controversy. Even now she heard Tom proclaiming:

"Garbage shall *not* be carried in Jamie's cart! I bought this cart for Jamie."

To this Sara was heard pleading:

"Chicken scraps isn't garbage, Father. Chicken scraps isn't *swill*!"

Tom's mother turned an accusing eye on Alice.

"Your children manage to use the most repulsive words," she reproved.

"You can call chicken scraps by any name you want to," came back Tom's voice, "but I say Jamie's cart is not to be used for it."

"It ain't fair!" cried Robert. "We have a nice, clean granite kettle that's washed every day. Chickens don't eat garbage—pigs eat it. And our arms get so tired carrying the things so far. *You* carry it and you'd see!"

A discussion of the shrillest arose. Sara's pathos over the long road and the hot sun soon became Gaelic in its quality; there was something in her wail which had in it the sorrow from which folk-songs are made.

In the turmoil Jamie alone remained calm. Technicalities as to whether what one fed to chickens was or was not garbage affected him not at all. He kept singing:

"It's my cart! You can't take my cart! It's my cart! You don't take my cart!"

Soon a cry arose from the older children:

"Why haven't *we* got a cart? If Jamie has a cart why can't we have a cart?"

To this Tom replied: "Jamie has to have *something*! You children are *not going to use Jamie's cart*." Then in sing-song came Jamie's little response:

"No, they can't have my cart! They can't have my cart!"

It seemed impossible that only four of them—one father and three children—came surging into the library, they having for the moment constituted Alice the Throne of Justice. In a tone which reminded her only too much of her eldest son, Tom Marcey burst out on his wife:

"Your children,"—and by this he meant, of course,

CHAPTER LXIII

FROM her window Alice watched them starting out. Sara was slacking; her fingers but daintily touched the kettle; Robert remonstrated. They both set it down and glared at one another. It came with definiteness to Alice that no good would come of this trip.

Tom came into the room.

"Alice," he said, reprovingly, "do you think——"

"I think that with a little flexibility one could avoid a great deal of noise, if you ask me!" she flashed at him.

She knew that she lacked both dignity and tact and that these were not the tactics with which to deal with an outraged husband, but into her heart surged Sara's heady joy in ill-doing. With these words she had flung out of the window her whole basket of tricks, all the various ways in the world which she knew—and they were many—of dealing with the temperament of Tom Marcey.

"I'm not talking about noise," said Tom.

"*I am*," Alice retorted maddeningly, "you always raise such a pother!"

"*I?*" Tom inquired, scandalized.

"You," Alice insisted firmly.

Tom looked at her with gravity.

"It seems to me that every one in this house, except me, has gone mad to-day," he asserted. "I don't understand you, Alice!"

"You don't need to tell me that," said Alice, "you never have and you never will, and what's more, I don't want you to!"

"Oh, very well!" said Tom huffily, and walked out of the room.

It seemed to Alice as if she were swept by chill wind. An awful sense of separation between her and those she loved enveloped her. Her second feeling was as though she had lost Tom forever. She was surprised to feel a hot drop on her hand and realized that she was crying.

Time dragged on. There was not a sound in the house.

Alice set her teeth. Whatever happened, Tom Marcey must come back to her of his own accord. Right or wrong she was not going to throw overboard all the traditions of women that had made life tenable in a difficult world, and go running after *him*.

Her treacherous heart suggested that orders were to be given to Laurie, that she wanted a book that was downstairs. She set herself sternly to the task of staying in her room.

She wanted to make up with Tom. She wanted to put things straight. She wanted to make up with him for the things she had thought about him and which she hadn't spoken. Off by herself, with Tom staying huffily downstairs, she knew that he was alienated from her not only by the question of Jamie's cart. What Tom was angry about was that Alice Marcey had acted as if the children were her children and her children alone. And since he was trying just as hard as she to progress along the stages of Parents Progress, he resented her unspoken superiority.

Another and deeper anguish began to grip her heart.

The children had not returned.

It is only too obvious to a mother, especially if she has let her nerves go, that if her children are a moment late, something has happened to them. This something is always lurking outside and dogging their every footstep every time they are out of her sight. Every motor-

car that passes, every window that is open, every tree that is climbed, partakes of the nature of the menacing Something that any time may happen to them, until it seems too good to be true that life will ever give them back to you safe and sound again.

Alice could endure it no longer.

She had to go and look for them.

Deep down within her was the knowledge that she was really going to look for Tom. She had given in, but she refused to look this shameful fact in the face.

Flying the lofty colors of a mother's love and anxiety—with the fact of her submission locked safely up out of sight, she went down the hall.

At the foot of the stairs she ran into Tom.

"Tom!" she cried. They might have been separated for a week.

"Alice!" They embraced one another.

"I was just going to look for the children."

"I am coming to find *you*!" he said, with savage tenderness.

Alice smiled. The world was as it should be. The secret at the bottom of her heart died. She had come out of her room only to look for the children.

One has to play tricks with oneself like this once in a while, or where indeed would self-respect be?

CHAPTER LXIV

THEY met the children coming down the street, singing. Their faces were alight with love of all the world and one another. They sang in chorus:

Ske-legged Pa,
Ske-legged Ma,
Ske-legged, ski-legged, bow-legged ma.

With them was Gladys Grayson. The two little girls disputed tenderly with one another for the privilege of helping dear Robert carry the chicken scraps, and he, with tender gallantry, carried the greatest burden of them.

They paused to dash upon their parents with fond embrace, and to the inquiries of,

"Why were you gone so long, my darlings?"

Sara replied: "'Twas because we had a nawful scrap! Oh, we *scrapped!* We fought!"

"What did you fight about?" Tom asked.

Recollections of injustice flooded over Sara. Her face darkened. She pointed her finger at Robert.

"'Twas he! He!" Tears trembled in her eyes. "'Twas he snatched my lovely tin-foil and threw it away and he wouldn't get it, but said I must go get it all alone, and I said, 'Why for must I get it alone?'"

"And you know why for!" said Robert. "If I had let you both go to get it together, you'd have beat it. I know you! And you said so yourself afterwards!"

"Why didn't *you* go get it, then? What was the idea of throwing it away?" his father demanded.

"He threw it because he's a mean, mean boy," cried Sara.

"I threw it to punish you, because you were selfish. She's mean herself, Father. Here I help her get tin-foil and she won't even let me touch it."

"When Gladys is alone, she's bad; and when Sara's alone, she's bad; but when both of them's together, they're fifteen times as bad! So Sara went to get it, and she ran away."

"Yes, I ran away—and I ran away—and I ran away—and I hid!" cried Sara in triumph. Then her voice softened to sweetness. "And I thought *poor* Gladys, my darling Gladys, she'll have to carry the scraps all alone in the hot sun! I won't be mean to my Gladys, no matter if Robert is a bad, bad boy! So I came back——" Her voice faltered a little over her own sweetness and goodness.

"She came back, mother," cried Robert, "and she stood away by a tree, bawling, 'Oh, no, you don't get me! Oh, no! Let Gladys come here a minute.' And she whispered in Gladys' ear, and, mother, they ran away *together*! So I put down the scraps and I ran after them."

It had been a terrific chase, racing over cross lots, through forbidden ways in people's yards, hiding in chicken-houses.

"And, mother, he never would have caught us, except that we caught a ride on a slow team."

Into Sara's mind there had flickered nothing but pride for her duplicity. She had been shameless and gloried in it. She had met the brutality of man with guile, but now the terrible and unjust burden which man has forever laid on woman overwhelmed her.

"And then, mother—what did he do then? Yes, what did he do? He marched us back after that horrid old



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the 1990s, the number of people in the United States who are obese has increased by 50% (Flegal et al. 2002). In the United Kingdom, the prevalence of obesity has increased from 10% in 1980 to 15% in 1997 (Health Survey for England 1997). In the United States, the prevalence of obesity has increased from 15% in 1980 to 23% in 1994 (Flegal et al. 2002).

Obesity is a complex condition, with many causes. It is a result of an imbalance between energy intake and energy expenditure. The most common cause of obesity is a combination of a diet high in calories and a sedentary lifestyle. Other causes include genetic factors, hormonal imbalances, and certain medications. Obesity is a major risk factor for many chronic diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancer.

There are many ways to prevent and treat obesity. The most effective way to prevent obesity is to maintain a healthy diet and an active lifestyle. If you are already obese, losing weight can help reduce your risk of developing chronic diseases. There are many weight loss programs available, including diet, exercise, and medication. It is important to choose a program that is safe and effective for you.

Obesity is a complex condition, and it is important to understand the causes and consequences of obesity. By taking steps to prevent and treat obesity, you can reduce your risk of developing chronic diseases and improve your overall health. If you are struggling with obesity, talk to your doctor about the best way to lose weight.

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